

# A SAGA<sup>ON</sup> HOME VIDEO



**A GUIDE BY NATHAN P. BUTLER**  
**SECOND EDITION - VOL. 2 OF 3**



# A Saga on Home Video

A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases

Second Edition (2021)  
Volume II

NATHAN P. BUTLER

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## DEDICATION

To my wife, Jodi, who has indulged this collecting obsession with encouragement, few complaints, and a minimum of bribery required

and

To my son, Cade, for whom that same collecting obsession might one day prove itself to be either an inspiration or a cautionary tale





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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A guide like this (and the collection that spawned it) benefits greatly from like-minded collectors. *Star Wars* home video collectors are a community within a community, a small niche area within a much broader fandom. We share ideas, knowledge, obscure discoveries, and sometimes even items that we no longer want or need but wish to pass along to a fellow collector.

Justin Berger's fantastic *Star Wars* Home Video group on Facebook ([facebook.com/groups/swhomevideo](https://facebook.com/groups/swhomevideo)) has become my favorite haunt on social media, where likeminded fans have gathered to share their love of collecting the films and other productions in their many forms across many formats. It remains one of the few places within online fandom where we rarely need to worry about the kind of toxicity that is so often found in other venues. My thanks to everyone who has engaged in discussion with me there and to Justin for setting up that great community.

Both within that Facebook group and among the viewership of my *From the Star Wars Home Video Library* series on YouTube, I have encountered numerous fellow fans who have shared information, helped me acquire products, and sometimes generously donated items into my collection from their own. In that regard, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to Bryan Absher, Aziz Al Sumait, Anthony Baccelliere, Luke Bastyr, Emiliano M. Becco, Dan L. Beeman, Jared Bell, the aforementioned Justin Berger, Jamie Bisson, Rikter Blaksvn, Stephen Bove, Hunter Alex Brown, Owen Brown, Kozmo Bunny, Darin Chambers, Chris Clarke, Lucas Coker, Jacob Comstock, Paul de la Rosa, Matt Desrochers, David Dumbell, Ryan Dunn, Justin Farnell, Matthew Fox, Claude Franklin, Sergey Geller, Josh Gibson, Jeremy Goss, Fr. Matthew Hardesty, Sam Hatch, Michael Heckman, Hadi Heydari, Tom Holste, Sam Howard, Ron Humphris, Stephen Jenkins, Darko Jukic, Jacob Kapoor, John Keane, Arnar Marvin Kristjánsson, James Kruczek, Aleks Kruz, Paul Landis, Weston LeDoux, Neil Lowery, Jason Luttrull, Mat from Techmoan, John Maxwell, Efrain G. Mejias, Dean Mosca, George Ooi, Adam Parish, Michael Picher, Thomas Quinn, Jeff Rabjohns, Ricky Rae, Tony Reese, Ruud Renders, Justin Richert, Andrew Robinson, Rebecca Samuels, J.D. Sanders, John Scoleri, Julian Smith, Brian Snook, James Snow, Jerry Stephens, Adam Tickner, Juan Angel Vallejo III, Wiebe van der Werk, Nathan Veneman, Max Volume, Lance Worth, and the late Will Wright. I especially wish to thank both Matthew Frey and Mark Westcott, whose donation of large chunks of their own libraries into mine greatly enhanced this guide and my own collection in recent years. There are also those to thank whose full names I do not know, often only usernames, some of whom may already be listed above: ZoltonF,

TheLegendKiller2100, Legofan2001, PixarMan2001, Devinnytroy, The Three Lemons, VintageVHSTreasures, Troy, and Kurt.

My own early interest in *Star Wars* Home Video, even before I became a collector myself, was stoked by the excellent (albeit now outdated) image collection at *SWonVideo.com*. A timeline of releases that was once maintained on *DavisDVD.com* by Patrick Mirza also served as an inspiration and foundation for an attempt to catalog such releases in my own early, meager way, within the pages of my *Star Wars Timeline Gold* before deciding that such a listing deserved a narrative guide of its own.

I am also indebted to the authors of the fantastic *Star Wars: Year by Year*, which helped clarify some of the release dates herein beyond mere years. Turnabout is fair play, I suppose. Of that great tome's writers, two of them (Dan Wallace and Pablo Hidalgo) previously referenced my fan-made *Star Wars* chronology project for their own *Essential Guides*. Other very helpful resources for release dates and other information included listings on Amazon (and its international counterparts like Amazon UK), *Blu-ray.com*, the LaserDisc Database, and *StarWarsMoviePoster.com*. (As I am not an expert by any means in *Star Wars* posters or action figures, *StarWarsMoviePoster.com* and assistance from Matt Desrochers, respectively, were invaluable when examining those items.)

I'd also like to take a moment here to apologize (only somewhat tongue-in-cheek) to fellow collectors who have seen my YouTube videos or read this guide (in its current or first edition form), only to be compelled to make more home video purchases. Fellow collector David Allen Brown coined the term "Butlered" on the *Star Wars* Home Video Facebook group, which he said was a verb that means, "When you buy lots of stuff because Nathan P. Butler shows you a video with cool *Star Wars* stuff and you realize your collection is somehow incomplete without it." As he put it, an example of the phrase in use would be: "My wife wants to speak to me in budget committee because we've been Butlered again."

Finally, I know that this guide, my personal collection, and so much more would not have been possible without the understanding and patience of my wife and fellow *Star Wars* fan, Jodi. I dove heavily into *Star Wars* home video collecting the same year we were married, and as that collection has grown, the YouTube series has taken on a life of its own, and now two editions of this guide have been in the works, she has yet to question my sanity or choices, even when sometimes the weight of a self-imposed task like this three-volume tome started to feel more like work than play and threatened to cause, rather than relieve, stress. I look forward to the day when she and I introduce our little Cade to the true depth of the *Star Wars* saga.



## PATREON CREDITS

On Oct. 17, 2017, I took a chance and finally launched a Patreon ([patreon.com/nathanpbutler](https://patreon.com/nathanpbutler)) to help offset the costs of things like the home video purchases that form the backbone of this book. In the process, it also provided an avenue through which to provide exclusive content to supporters of my work that have been willing to put their hard-earned dollars on the line to help me keep my various projects going strong.

All supporters, whether they are Travelers Through the Butlerniverse (\$1 patrons that receive thanks in monthly update videos on Patreon and YouTube), Denizens of the Butlerniverse (\$5 patrons that also receive exclusive audio commentaries), or Nobility of the Butlerniverse (\$10 patrons that also receive exclusive Q&A videos each month on top of everything else), are appreciated, and this second edition of *A Saga on Home Video* has finally given me the opportunity to provide them with the thanks in print that they have been promised for so long.

My heartfelt thanks go out to the following Patreon supporters (Oct. 17, 2017, through Oct. 31, 2021): Ben Abrams, Joseph C. Balaich, Andrew Bettis, “BigMacDavis,” Jamie Bisson, David Bittner, Joseph Blankenship, Levi Bond, Elias Breitner, Dave Broadway, Candi Cabaniss, Craig Clayton, Jonathan Confer, Travis Cook, Bobby Craig, Martin Dahl, Matt Desrochers, Jeff Ellis, Preston Ellis, Pavel Gerasimov, Andrew Gilbertson, Mitch Godfrey, Jeremy Goss, Matthew Hardesty, Matthew Hadish, Sam Howard, Jaina Hunt, Kai Jacoby, Tony Jenkins, John, Jacob Kapoor, Kevin Kreiner, Bon Lainez, Walker Langstraat, Chris Lewis, Chris Lock, Anas Maatough, Daniel Marchant, Robert Medina, Aaron Melzak, Steven Milicia, Chris Morgan, Nathan W. Mortimer, Jeremiah Mustered, Thomas Myers, Caleb Owens, “PDotE,” Austin Pearce, Kyle Pelegri, Jonathan Pickens, Jeff Rabjohns, Jared Rascher, David Ray, Justin Richert, Alexandre Santos, Gary Sherwood, “Skytrypalasmr,” Brian Snook, Ben P. Stein, Connor Stierman, Travis Taylor, Michael Torson, Casey Urie, Chris Walker, Joey Zitzman, and my very first Patreon supporter ever, Benjamin Handelman.



## PREFACE TO VOLUME II

The second edition of *A Saga on Home Video* was not meant to be three volumes. As described in the preface to *Volume I*, it was necessary to split the massive tome into separate publications as it grew (and grew and grew) into something unwieldy (both physically and digitally, at least in terms of the writing and editing process). Upon deciding that the guide would need to be split, though, an important question lingered. Should the live action, theatrical films that formed the first 9 chapters of the guide be presented in a single volume, or would that half of the guide's 18 chapters need to be split even further?

The community was divided on the question at first, as I consulted fellow collectors and potential readers on the best course of action. In the end, the decision to separate coverage of the live action, theatrical films into one volume through 2015 and another beginning in 2016 came down to making each volume somewhat equivalent in length, rather than a 500 – 600 page first volume and a second (now *Volume III*) that would have been much smaller. Doing so would also give each volume, not just the one focused “beyond the films,” a chance to continue growing if a third edition were ever planned without causing the same concerns that arose during the writing of this second edition.

Could the current *Volumes I* and *II* have remained a single volume if I had cut content? Perhaps, but the sacrificed content would undoubtedly have been the fascinating peeks into the South Korean, Chinese, and other markets that shine a light on how different (and sometimes substandard) the American approach to these films has been in the Disney era. I hope you will find those items intriguing and the insights they provide into the broader collecting world to be worth the possible inconvenience of three volumes rather than two.

Those new sidebars provide a wonderful little maze of international

releases to get lost within. Just be wary of being drawn into international collecting. The costs involved may be the krayt dragon waiting to devour those who delve too deeply...

Welcome to *A Saga on Home Video*. Thank you for reading, and may the Force be with you.

## **A Brief Guide to *Volume II***

### **Previously...**

Before diving into *Volume II*, which includes coverage of *Episodes I – VI* for releases in the same era as the first five Disney era films, you may want to peruse *Volume I*, which covers the *Original* and *Prequel Trilogy* releases from 1977 through 2015.

### **Chapter 7: Enter: Disney (2016 – 2017)**

Our coverage of the Disney film era begins with the only two of the Disney films to have been covered in *A Saga on Home Video*'s first edition: *The Force Awakens* and *Rogue One*. Material has been greatly expanded.

This chapter also begins a detailed series of *Meanwhile in...* sidebars that highlight the most elaborate Japanese release of each film, all South Korean releases, and all Chinese Blufans releases for the Disney era films, alongside similar sidebars covering all UK releases that made their debut in the first edition. (See *A Brief Guide to Sidebars* below.)

### **Chapter 8: Rise of 4K, Demise of 3D (2018)**

Coverage of the Disney era continues with *The Last Jedi* and *Solo*, as the films make their way to Ultra HD Blu-ray but no longer receive American Blu-ray 3D releases.

### **Chapter 9: All Together Now (2019 – 2020)**

The purchase of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox entertainment assets, including 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, by Walt Disney Company sets the stage for huge waves of new releases, including *The Rise of Skywalker*, a *Skywalker Saga* boxed set, and much, much more.

### **To be continued...**

Coverage expands beyond the live action, theatrical films in *Volume III*, which covers *Star Wars* television series, the animated *The Clone Wars* film, behind-the-scenes content, miscellaneous items that do not readily fit into other chapters, a brief dive into Disney+ content, and tips for *Star Wars* home video collectors.

### **A Brief Guide to Sidebars**

Sections like this, which are set aside in separate, darker boxes, are referred to as “sidebars.” They address various related (but often somewhat tangential) topics that broaden our look at *Star Wars* on home video but are not necessarily an integral part of the American release narrative. Not all sidebar types are present in all three volumes. Three sidebar categories are new to this edition (and listed last below).

### **Meanwhile in [Insert Country/Region]**

These sidebars focus on various noteworthy foreign releases. They often provide a contrast to the American home video market, but sometimes they are items that were just too interesting to ignore. These sidebars always note the location and date of the item(s) in question.

### **Forever Tinkering**

George Lucas is known for making frequent changes to his films after their initial release. This category of sidebar provides brief opinions on these changes to the live action films without aiming to be a comprehensive list of those changes.

### **Changes for Better and/or Worse**

This category is similar to *Forever Tinkering* but takes a much more comprehensive approach. It aims to detail the various changes between edits of *Star Wars* television series episodes that have been far less documented than changes to the live action films.

### **For a More Digital Age**

These sidebars are used to call out digital releases or bonus items, whether through venues that allow digital purchases (e.g. iTunes) or streaming services (e.g. Disney+).

### **Go Figure: Hasbro Commemorates Home Video**

This type of sidebar addresses Hasbro action figure releases that were designed to celebrate particular *Star Wars* home video releases (but did *not* include home video items themselves, sometimes leading to confusion).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As I'm not a figure collector myself, much of the information for these sidebars comes from fellow collector Matt Desrochers.

### **Spectacles for the Spectacle**

Of the 11 live action *Star Wars* theatrical films to date, 6 have been shown in 3D theatrically (with 2 more shown in 3D only at conventions), and 5 have had Blu-ray 3D releases (though only 2 of those 5 did in America). With 3D a fun niche within *Star Wars* home and theatrical viewing, this sidebar is designed to provide a look at the various *Star Wars* RealD 3D glasses produced to celebrate *Star Wars* theatrical 3D releases, which may also be used with home theater setups that use RealD passive 3D when playing Blu-ray 3D discs.

### **Across the Galaxy**

This final category simply provides pictures of various releases from different regions side-by-side, even when not all of those releases are actually covered in their own sidebars. Why? I just find that kind of side-by-side imagery compelling and interesting, and I hope you will too.



## 7 ENTER: DISNEY

(2016 – 2017)

At the time of the 2013 and 2015 home video releases of George Lucas' six live action *Star Wars* films, the saga had been in a period of transition, while fandom was quickly dividing into factions.

The catalyst for these changes was the announcement in Oct. 2012 that the Walt Disney Company was purchasing Lucasfilm, which put the future of the franchise into the same hands that guided the highly successful Marvel Cinematic Universe. Unsurprisingly, this deal, which was finalized for \$4.06 billion<sup>2</sup> in Dec. 2012, included the promise of more films in the franchise, beginning with *Episode VII*. Lucas' story changed from saying there were only ever to have been six films (after previously saying one, then twelve starting with *A New Hope*, then the more well-known plan of nine with ANH as *Episode IV*) to saying that he only ever said that *he* would not make more films, not that someone else couldn't someday. Meanwhile, *The Clone Wars*, which had run since Oct. 2008 (two months after the theatrical release of its pilot film), was to end on Cartoon Network in 2013, though a sixth, partial season would appear on Netflix in Mar. 2014 (and, unbeknownst to us at the time, a seventh, final season would premiere on Disney+ in Feb. 2020). The new *Rebels* cartoon series was announced and scheduled to air its double-length pilot episode in Oct. 2014.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> That would have been about \$1.07 billion in 1977 when ANH premiered.

<sup>3</sup> For information on *The Clone Wars* and *Rebels*, see the chapters *Rewriting the Clone Wars* and *Joining the Rebellion*, respectively, in *Volume III*.

More tumultuously, in light of new films that were already expected to rewrite galactic “history” for longtime fans of the Official Continuity (novels, comics, video games, etc.), it was announced in Apr. 2014 that the saga that had grown around new fiction works, mostly in print, since 1991 (and which retroactively encompassed stories as far back as the 1976 ANH novelization) was to be set aside as a sort of alternate timeline, known as “Legends,” while a new unified canon<sup>4</sup> would be built around *Episodes I – VI*, *The Clone Wars*, new films and TV series under Disney, and a new line of books and comics. More than perhaps any other aspect of the Disney purchase of Lucasfilm, this change caused massive upheavals within *Star Wars* fandom, both before and after stories like *Blade Squadron*, *A New Dawn*, and *Skywalker Strikes* set this new continuity in motion in different media.



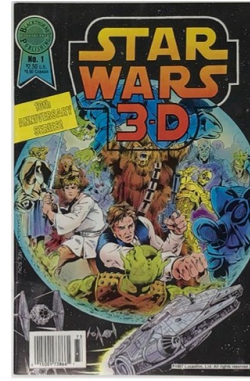
Early “Legends” material – Left to right: ANH novelization (1976) by “George Lucas” (ghost written by Alan Dean Foster); Marvel Comics’ *Star Wars* issue 1 (1977), beginning Roy Thomas’ adaptation of ANH (1977); Marvel’s *Star Wars* issue 7 (1977), featuring the first original post-ANH *Star Wars* story in the series; *Splinter of the Mind’s Eye* (1978), the first original *Star Wars* novel, also by Foster.

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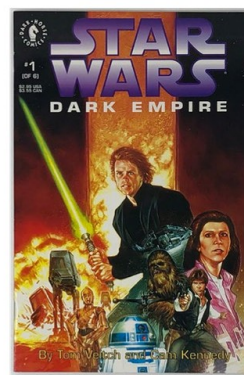
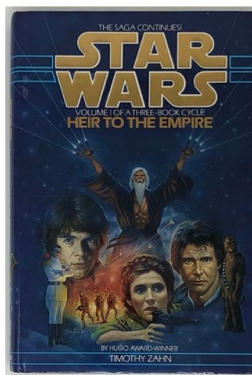
<sup>4</sup> The previous continuity had been an overtly tiered system, consisting of George Lucas’ direct, live action, theatrical contributions (G-Canon), *The Clone Wars* with heavy input from Lucas (T-Canon), and other materials produced to fit into that continuity but subordinate to Lucas’ vision (C-Canon), while sometimes acknowledging some of the questionable materials labeled as secondary content (S-Canon). A final designation, N-Canon, referred to anything explicitly not part of the broader continuity made up of the other categories. The new continuity would, in theory (though not in practice), eschew a system of different continuity levels in favor of creating a new timeline of canonical works that put novels, comics, and cartoons on (supposedly) equal footing with the films themselves.



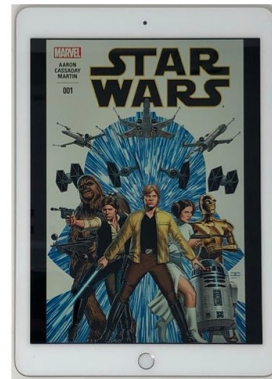
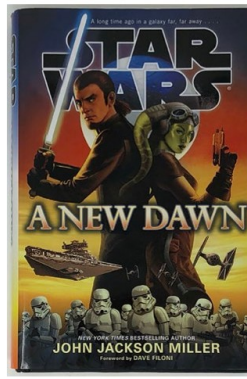
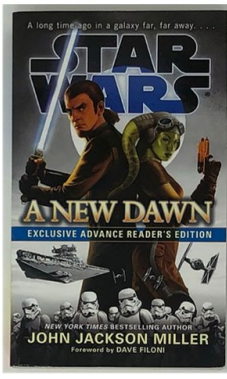
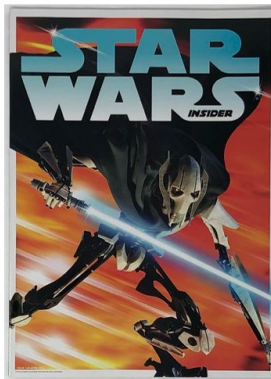
## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



First issues of the last three series to run before the launch of the “Official Continuity” – Left to right: *Ewoks* (1985); *Droids* (1986); *Star Wars 3-D* (1987)



The publications that launched the “Official Continuity” in 1991: *Heir to the Empire* by Timothy Zahn (left) and *Dark Empire* issue 1 by Tom Veitch (right)



Some of the earliest stories of the Story Group's new canon – Left to right: *Star Wars Insider* issue 149 (including “Blade Squadron, Part I” by David J. Williams and Mark S. Williams, Apr. 2014); San Diego Comic-Con “Exclusive Advance Reader's Edition” of *A New Dawn* by John Jackson Miller (July 2014); the retail hardback of *A New Dawn* (Sept. 2014); Marvel's rebooted *Star Wars* issue 1 (“Skywalker Strikes, Part I”) by Jason Aaron (Jan. 2015), appropriately shown here in digital form

*Star Wars* home video was one of the few aspects of the franchise that seemed to have been mostly immune from this era of controversy and change. Sure, new films and television series would be released on home

video, and one could easily expect distributors and perhaps even the approach to aspects of home video (such as digital copies) to change, but with the physical distribution rights to *Episodes I – III* and *V – VI* already tied up with 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox until 2020 (and in perpetuity in the case of *Episode IV*), home video releases could proceed as normal with only minor aftershocks of the Great Disney-Lucasfilm Quake of 2012.

The true test of how Disney would affect *Star Wars* on home video came in 2016 with the release of *The Force Awakens*.

### **The Mouse Awakens (2016)**

The choice to release *The Force Awakens* in theaters on Dec. 18, 2015, rather than during the typical May *Star Wars* release window, meant that for the first time since TPM, a *Star Wars* film would premiere in theaters without seeing its home video release in the same calendar year. Far more important than the calendar year, though, was the *gap* between those releases. As was often the case, the gap between theatrical and home video releases shrank. Rather than the six months that fans had waited for *Revenge of the Sith* to come home, *The Force Awakens* took only 105 days to be available digitally and just 109 days to be available on physical media, the shortest wait yet for a live action *Star Wars* film. Prior to TFA, only the animated *The Clone Wars* film was released in less time (88 days).

By 2016, new patterns had emerged in the American home video market. First, many films that were released in 3D in theaters (as was the case with *The Force Awakens*) received home video releases that combined a Blu-ray 3D film disc, Blu-ray film disc, possibly a Blu-ray bonus features disc, and often either a DVD copy, digital copy, or both. Many films also received digital releases through venues like iTunes a matter of days or weeks prior to a physical home video release. How, if at all, would TFA meet these new norms?

The first way to purchase TFA for home viewing was indeed as a digital copy, albeit only four days prior to the film's physical media release (on Apr. 1 and 5, 2016, respectively). Direct, digital-only purchases included all of the bonus content of the primary physical product, while providing the film four days early. Fans could also purchase a small "Limited Edition" preorder folder in advance at various retailers, which would provide them with a digital preorder code, along with small (approx. 6.81 in. x 10 in.) recreations of the film's teaser (version A), IMAX, and main (version B) theatrical posters.<sup>5</sup> The folder itself also bore the version B poster art. The

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<sup>5</sup> I am no expert on *Star Wars* poster art. Any information herein on *Star Wars* poster art, such as that used for home video covers or art cards, comes from



digital redemption code would also provide Disney Movie Rewards<sup>6</sup> points upon redemption, the same as the digital copy codes in the physical Blu-ray/DVD/digital multi-format packs.



TFA Limited Edition Digital Movie Pre-order pack  
(Digital, 2016) – code sheet and folder



Mini-posters

The physical copies of *The Force Awakens* released by Walt Disney

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research online, especially through the great resource galleries at *StarWarsMoviePoster.com*.

<sup>6</sup> This was a service that allowed fans to redeem codes or online purchases for points that could then be redeemed for Disney products, such as posters, home video items, gift cards for the Disney Store, and access to special Disney events like tours. This customer loyalty reward program continued into 2019, when it was then replaced by a revamped version of the service, Disney Movie Insiders.

Studios Home Entertainment<sup>7</sup> in the U.S. on Apr. 5, 2016, were far less straightforward, owing to an era in which retailer exclusive content or packaging had become commonplace for blockbusters. Rather than having a single release available at all retailers, several American companies released special variant versions, sometimes with new packaging and, in one case, exclusive new video content. A completist would need to pick up multiple copies to have the entire American TFA release lineup. Even more frustrating to fans with 3D televisions, this initial home video release did not include a Blu-ray 3D disc in any of the various packages.<sup>8</sup>

A rundown of these different versions of TFA's initial release is best begun with the most simplistic of options. The absolute most basic was the DVD-only release. This product included the film on DVD in a standard, black DVD case with a cover based on the film's version B theatrical poster. The DVD's label featured an image from the film of Rey and BB-8 walking together shortly after meeting. Unlike its multi-format counterparts, this DVD-only product did not come with a cardboard slipcover. This release also did not include any bonus features whatsoever (not even a commentary), though it did include a code that was redeemable for Disney Movie Rewards points (but *not* for a digital copy of the movie). The code was included on a slip that used the film's IMAX poster art.

We should note here that, going forward, each time we see a new Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment DVD release of a *Star Wars* film, including this one, the most complex audio option available was Dolby Digital 5.1.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In the first edition of this book, I erroneously referred to Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment as "Walt Disney Home Video." The company has been Walt Disney Home Entertainment (1978 – 1979), Walt Disney Home Video (1980 – 2000), Walt Disney Home Entertainment again (2001 – 2006), and Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment (2007 – present).

<sup>8</sup> To be fair, this was stated up front in the initial product announcement on Mar. 3, 2016, via the official *Star Wars* website, which said that "the 3D version... will be available later this year." We knew another TFA release was coming in 2016 even before the first copies hit shelves.

<sup>9</sup> Unless mislabeled (and I've not been able to check myself due to my home theater setup), this was a step down in terms of the number of audio channels from the 5.1 EX audio used for the DVD releases of the previous films.

TFA (DVD, 2016) – The included digital code only provided Disney Movie Rewards points, rather than a digital copy of the film.



What one might call the “regular” version of the multi-format TFA releases was a pack which contained two Blu-ray discs (one for the film *without* a commentary and one for bonus features), one DVD (the same film-only DVD as in the DVD-only package), and a code for a digital copy with all of that release’s bonus features included. The code slip featured the same IMAX poster art as the points-only slip for the DVD-only release and did indeed also provide Disney Movie Rewards points. The second Blu-ray’s most touted feature was the hour-long *Secrets of The Force Awakens: A Cinematic Journey*. A series of smaller featurettes looked at the creation of BB-8, the original table read for the film, the creation of the creature and visual effects, John Williams’ score, and the final lightsaber duel. A featurette was also included to discuss the “Force for Change” charity initiative to unite fans in providing aid to people across the globe. Six deleted scenes were also on the disc.

This regular version came in a black (but otherwise standard) Blu-ray case that featured the film’s poster art (version B), similar to the DVD-only release. Unlike the DVD-only package, though, the regular multi-format pack included a cardboard slipcover<sup>10</sup> with the *Star Wars* logo filled with

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<sup>10</sup> I should note here that most products in this era that were released with slipcovers would often only have slipcovers for early copies. Items would then be restocked with the “same” product without the slipcover included. This happened rather frequently with Disney releases, making the hunt for slipcovers to match products purchased without them into a small side niche of *Star Wars* home video



artwork from the same poster. The DVD label was the same as when sold separately, while the Blu-ray film label featured the *Millennium Falcon* in combat with TIE fighters on Jakku and the bonus features Blu-ray label featured a black and white image of the film's first "table read."

Unlike the Dolby Digital 5.1 audio of the DVD or the 6.1 DTS-HD Master Audio of *Episodes I – VI* on Blu-ray, the Blu-ray film disc for TFA included a more advanced DTS-HD Master Audio 7.1 audio option, adding another channel of audio (such that now we had left, center, and right in front of us, then left and right speakers to our sides and to provide surround sound behind us, along with a subwoofer for lower frequencies). This did not yet include the literally higher speakers (as in "speakers above us") that we would eventually see with setups like the Dolby Atmos 7.1.4 option, but it was another step forward in *Star Wars* home video release sound options.



TFA (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016)

The regular multi-format and DVD-only releases were widely available. Oddly, even the Disney Store (and its online equivalent, the oddly-capitalized and space-lacking "shopDisney"), the House of Mouse's own retail chain, sold only these standard packages. They did, however, reward customers who preordered with a folder of four 14 in. x 10 in. lithographs

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collecting.



as a bonus. The folder featured the logo from the standard multi-format release against a starfield on one side and BB-8 on the other. Images included: Kylo Ren on Takodana; TIE fighters on Jakku; Rey and BB-8 on Takodana; and Han Solo with Chewbacca for their “Chewie, we’re home” moment. It is important to note that Disney’s own exclusive lithographs came *only* from Disney Store and shopDisney this time around. *Rogue One* would add another means to acquire a Disney exclusive lithograph through the Disney Movie Club, but that was *not* an option for TFA.



Lithograph folder (open)



2016 Disney Store  
lithograph seal



TFA Disney Store and shopDisney preorder lithographs

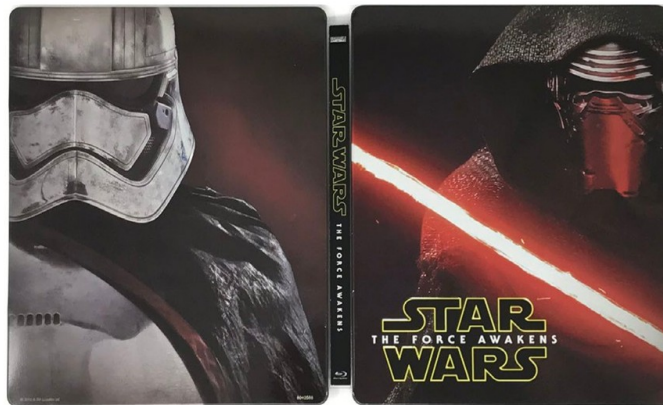
For the American market, retail chains Best Buy, Walmart, and Target each sold their own exclusive version of the multi-format pack.

At Best Buy, fans could purchase the exact same content as in the standard multi-format package. However, the discs and code slip were housed in a SteelBook case that featured Kylo Ren on the front and Captain Phasma on the back. Unfortunately, much to the ire of many SteelBook aficionados, this SteelBook did not quite match the design of

20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment's SteelBooks of the other live action films from the previous year, making for an unmatched set on collectors' shelves.<sup>11</sup>



TFA (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016) – Best Buy exclusive



Best Buy exclusive SteelBook (exterior) – Notice that the American version was language-dependent (English) for its front logo and spine text.

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<sup>11</sup> This was probably an unrealistic expectation. While it would have been nice for the TFA SteelBook to line up perfectly with those of the other films, they were released by two different companies (Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment for TFA and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment for the others). Those two entities wouldn't actually coordinate a set of matching *Star Wars* releases until the Walmart holiday reissues of 2017. More on that later in this chapter.





Interior

Walmart's exclusive version included not only the same discs and digital code but also the same inner, black Blu-ray case with the same art. It was the outer cardboard slipcover that changed this time, which featured BB-8 and unfastened (via Velcro) to unfold and show the film's five main protagonists. Inside the package, this release also included a single, random Topps *Star Wars Galactic Connexions* disc for use with that collectible game, which was also exclusive to Walmart.



TFA (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016) – Walmart exclusive



Walmart packaging  
(Velcro section opened)



Walmart exclusive *Galactic Connexions* trading game disc

This release caused a bit of consternation among fans who saw it advertised as including an exclusive “disc” and, unfamiliar with *Galactic Connexions*, assumed it to be a Blu-ray or DVD with extra content, rather than a game piece. (To be fair, a sticker on the package said, “Exclusive packaging” and “*Star Wars Galactic Connexions* trading disc,” so the “trading” part should have been an indicator that it wasn’t more video content, even for buyers unfamiliar with the game itself.)

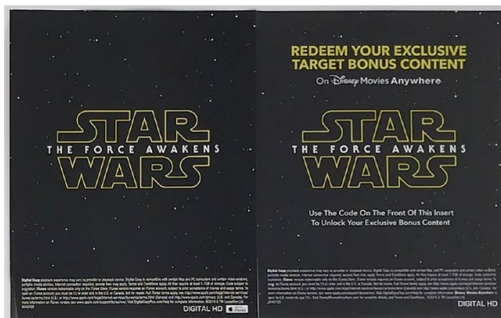
The only physical release to include exclusive new video content (albeit digital-only) was found at Target. In this case, the same discs were packaged in a fold-out cardboard jacket, rather than in a standard Blu-ray case of any kind. (This flimsy packaging made for plenty of fan complaints.) The cover featured the film’s five “character poster” images (also known as the “one eye” poster series) and a sixth, similar image for BB-8. When unfolded once, it presented the same heroes image on the left as the opened Walmart exclusive variant’s flap, while an image of Kylo Ren, Armitage Hux, and Captain Phasma appeared on the right. Upon unfolding each side one final time, the character posters of Leia, Han, Rey, and Finn graced the case’s inner layer. While the digital copy codes for all other multi-format releases (and even the digital-only preorder codes) were identical in what they unlocked on digital platforms, the Target exclusive version’s digital code unlocked two additional featurettes: *The Scavenger and the Stormtrooper* and *Inside the Armory*.



A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



TFA (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016) – Target exclusive



Digital code slips –  
Regular (left) vs. Target (right)



Target exclusive interior  
(unfolded once)



Target exclusive interior (fully unfolded)

### **For a More Digital Age (2016)**

A digital copy of *The Force Awakens* could be purchased or redeemed to be viewed on several platforms. In the past, this would have often limited a customer to only that single platform for watching the purchased content, but by Apr. 2016, Disney Movies Anywhere was able to link to the user's iTunes, Amazon Video, Vudu, Google Play, and Microsoft Video accounts. (Verizon Fios support would arrive in Aug. 2016, four months after the TFA release. Fandango Now support would be added in Apr. 2018.) Once synchronized, Disney-owned digital content purchases could be played on any of these platforms. This even retroactively included earlier purchases, so that the *Digital Movie Collection* also benefitted from this synchronization, with the exception of ANH (once again due to its distribution rights deal having been handled differently than for the other *Original* and *Prequel Trilogy* films).<sup>12</sup>

In terms of digital exclusive content, those who preordered TFA on digital platforms (or just accessed them, even without a preorder, on some platforms) received the *Legacy* featurette, also known as the *Brazil Comic-Con Experience*. (This extra was released on the official *Star Wars* YouTube channel before the film even premiered, so it was not a deal-breaker by any means.) iTunes, meanwhile, presented the exclusive *Dressing the Galaxy* featurette.<sup>13</sup> Disney Movies Anywhere provided an extra deleted scene, "Tunnel Standoff." Each was available on their respective platforms regardless of whether that was where a synchronized library purchase originated.

On Amazon Video, customers could view the film with an "X-ray" subtitle track that provided interesting trivia about the film.

Those who preordered through Sony's PlayStation Store received a special Jakku theme, but this was available only to those purchasing via Sony's platform, which was one of the only major digital platforms that could not be linked and synchronized with Disney Movies Anywhere. (As of the publication of this guide, Sony has not joined DMA's successor, Movies Anywhere, either, but that is a moot point, as Sony ceased selling or

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<sup>12</sup> See the chapter *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I* for more on the distribution rights issue.

<sup>13</sup> This is not to be confused with the 2005 book of a nearly identical name, whose deluxe edition included a DVD bearing its name. See the chapter *Behind the Curtain* in *Volume III*.

renting movie or TV content as of Aug. 31, 2021.)

With four different multi-format versions to collect, plus the DVD release, and, for completists, the digital preorder package's mini-posters and Disney Store lithographs, this launch was both praise- and cringe-worthy. On the one hand, including codes for digital copies was something fans had wanted for *Star Wars* for years, yet had only appeared previously for *The Clone Wars*.<sup>14</sup> This was a positive step, as was packing Blu-ray and DVD together, though tentative first steps had already been taken with the trilogy combo packs of 2013 (and even earlier with *LEGO Star Wars: The Padawan Menace* in 2011)<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand, multiple retailer exclusives meant missing out on some physical or digital bonuses unless fans chose to purchase multiple copies of the same discs. This was to be the “new normal” under Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment.

### **Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2016)**

In some regions, the idea of Blu-rays coming with DVD copies, digital copy codes, or both, was not the standard that it was quickly becoming in the United States. The United Kingdom was such a market, making their options a bit different than ours. Four different versions of *The Force Awakens* were part of the initial round of UK releases on Apr. 18 (nearly two weeks after the U.S. physical release on Apr. 5). Two releases included a standard Blu-ray case (blue in the UK, rather than the black of the U.S.) with similar art to the standard American releases and either a white and blue or black and red slipcover, known as the *Lightside* and *Darksides* versions (without a space between “light/dark” and “side”). The discs themselves, as we will find for most Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment Blu-ray releases for the films worldwide, were Region ABC (AKA “all-region” or “region-free”).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See the chapter *Rewriting the Clone Wars* in *Volume III*.

<sup>15</sup> See the chapter *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I* for information on the trilogies' combo packs. See the chapter *Brick by Brick* in *Volume III* for information on *The Padawan Menace*.

<sup>16</sup> Going forward, I will only call out a Blu-ray's region when it is *not* region-free.





TFA (UK Blu-ray, 2016) –  
Lightside slipcover



TFA (UK Blu-ray, 2016) –  
Darkside slipcover

A third release was in a SteelBook from retailer Zavvi<sup>17</sup>, which was similar to the American SteelBook without a title or logo on the front and a spine that featured the character poster images in column, rather than the film's title. There are two things that should be noted about SteelBooks as we begin examining versions from other regions. First, this style of SteelBook that lacks text and uses images (usually character portraits) for its spine was developed in order to limit the number of SteelBook variations that would need to be produced to sell in markets with different dominant languages. I will hereafter refer to them usually as “language independent” versions. Second, SteelBooks were typically identified by their covers and interior art, *not* by the number of discs they could hold. For example, the American Best Buy SteelBook for TFA was designed to hold three discs, so it had two disc slots on the right side and one on the left. The UK version from Zavvi was designed to hold two discs, so it had two slots on the right but no slots on the left. When I refer to SteelBooks as being “the same” between regions, that typically refers just to the design (i.e. artwork), not to the number of disc slots, which can be determined in the description and product image caption for that particular region's SteelBook.

<sup>17</sup> Formerly Virgin Megastore





TFA (UK Blu-ray, 2016) – Zavvi exclusive



Zavvi exclusive SteelBook (exterior) – Note the lack of text/logo on front, plus character portrait spine art. This language independent format was often found in regions where English was not the dominant language. This SteelBook was an anomaly in the UK, as we will soon see.



SteelBook spine comparison:  
U.S. (left) vs. UK (right)

Notice that both included the Lucasfilm logo at the top and Blu-ray symbol at the bottom. The UK (and regions like Japan) used the language independent variant that included character portraits (Kylo Ren, Han Solo, Leia Organa, Rey, and Finn) instead of any form of title (English or otherwise).



SteelBook interior comparison: U.S. (top) vs. UK (bottom)  
Notice that the number of disc slots varied, which was quite common.

What's interesting was that all three of these releases were Blu-ray only (film and bonus discs) without a DVD or digital copy included. To acquire

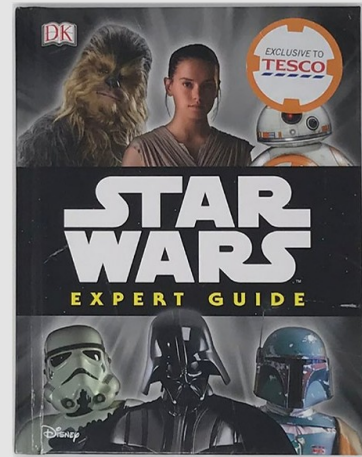
a DVD, one would have to purchase the final item in this release wave, a Region 2 PAL DVD-only release (also without a digital copy code) that was quite similar in design to the U.S. version.

It is also worth noting that UK releases did not include codes for Disney Movie Rewards points, since DMR was not available in the region.

For those seeking bonus items, UK retailer Tesco offered a small (5.4 in. x 7 in.), exclusive hardback book with purchase of the film. Billed as the *Star Wars Expert Guide* and published by Dorling Kindersley (DK), it consisted of material taken from earlier DK *Star Wars* guides: *Battles for the Galaxy* (2011); *Mysteries of the Jedi* (2011); *Beware the Sith* (2012); and the TFA *Visual Dictionary* (2015).<sup>18</sup>



TFA (UK DVD, 2016)



*Star Wars Expert Guide*  
(2016) – Tesco exclusive

### Meanwhile in Japan (2016)

In Japan, Disney had a service that was somewhat like a hybrid between the U.S. Disney Movie Club and Disney Movies Anywhere (a source of home video releases but also a digital video content locker), known as MovieNEX. For *The Force Awakens*, fans could purchase what roughly translated as a *Premium Limited Box Edition* of the film. This product, released on May 4, 2016, was perhaps the fanciest variant available for the original 2016 release of TFA.

<sup>18</sup> Strangely, this meant that three of the four sources for the *Expert Guide* were published pre-reboot when the earlier Official Continuity (now referred to as the Legends continuity), not Disney's newer canon, was in place.





TFA *Premium Limited Box Edition* (Japanese Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016)

SteelBook, *Special Guide Book*, and Kylo Ren figure with stand



A nice, glossy (i.e. very reflective) box with cover art similar to the standard, American, multi-format pack opened to reveal a SteelBook copy of TFA that was outwardly identical to the language independent UK SteelBook from Zavvi, but this one included the Blu-ray film disc, Blu-ray bonus features disc, and a DVD copy not found in the UK SteelBook, making it similar in that regard to the U.S. releases. Beside it on this top layer of packaging was an unopened, carded Hasbro Kylo Ren figure from the TFA toy line. (It was distinguished by a Takara Tomy sticker over the bottom half of the card back.) Above the figure in a small, sectioned-off area was a stand for the figure to be placed upon if opened.

Lifting out two layers of formed cardboard packaging revealed other items within the bottom layer of the box. One was the *Star Wars: Special Guide Book*, which bore a classic line on the cover: "Here's where the fun begins." Inside, most text on its nearly fifty pages was in Japanese. It briefly detailed the main characters of TFA, vehicles and vessels of TFA, character relationships, and information on each of the original six films.



Art prints



Included in the same indentation in the box was a plastic package that could be turned into a display stand for a set of included art cards (measuring approx. 7.19 in. x 10.06 in., a bit larger than the American preorder package's mini-posters), featuring a "poster" with the same logo as the standard, American, multi-format pack slipcover, the regular (version B) theatrical poster, the five character ("one eye") posters (Han, Leia, Rey, Finn, and Kylo Ren), an image of the villains (Kylo Ren, Phasma, and Armitage Hux in artwork also seen in the U.S. Target exclusive from Apr. 2016), an image of the heroes (Finn, BB-8, Rey, Han, and Poe, similar to the inside of the Walmart and Target exclusives from Apr. 2016 in the U.S.), and Luke Skywalker with his hood up.

A digital copy code to be redeemed through MovieNEX was also included (on a slip with the same artwork as the box), along with a small advertising booklet. Both were fairly simple visually with the TFA home video logo dominating the former and the Japanese film logo adorning the latter.



MovieNEX digital copy code, advertising booklet, Blu-ray film disc, Blu-ray bonus features disc, and DVD

Art print frame (suitable for display)



This fantastic package's Blu-rays were Region A (which included the United States) with Japanese and English audio, plus Japanese and English subtitles, making them entirely viewable by members of an American, English-speaking audience. The DVD, however, was Region 2 (NTSC), so it would not play in an American player unless that player was specifically designated as region-free.

Much like the 1995 *The Definitive Collection* VHS set of the *Original Trilogy* from the UK when compared to its U.S. contemporaries, what seemed the best of the 2016 TFA releases appeared outside of the United States.

### Meanwhile in South Korea (2016)

SteelBooks were a major collecting focus in this era, but for all the hype over new releases, the American SteelBooks and their UK counterparts



were usually relatively lackluster compared to others that were released internationally. Even Japan had stiff competition for sheer “coolness” with some other Asian markets. With that in mind, we will be taking a look at the various South Korean (and soon Chinese) releases for each of the Disney era *Star Wars* films. For collectors of the Disney era films, they are often very nice companion (or even replacement) pieces for the U.S. products, especially for SteelBook collectors.

On Apr. 27, 2016, TFA saw its first South Korean releases. The first was a DVD-only package. This was a Region 3 DVD with a different disc label image (from the *Millennium Falcon* and TIE fighter chase on Jakku, rather than Rey with BB-8), stored within a standard DVD case with similar art to that of the U.S. The package also included a slipcover with art that was similar to a taller version of the American Target exclusive version's cover. Also included inside the package was a small BB-8 standee (approx. 5.19 in. tall at the top of his antenna and 3.88 in. wide at its base) and a small (7.13 in. x 4.69 in.) insert that doubled as an art card, which featured the same shot as the American Blu-ray film disc label. This began a pattern that we will see in the Disney era *Star Wars* releases out of South Korea. The DVD releases tended to include slipcovers, and the Korean title, rather than the English one, was emblazoned on disc label, case, and slipcover. On the other hand, the HD releases would tend to feature the English title on the case, disc label, and slipcover with just a tiny Korean title underneath it (barely visible in these images, which should give you a sense of just how tiny those Korean titles were on anything other than DVD).



TFA (South Korean DVD, 2016)

The second of these initial, standard releases of TFA in South Korea

was on Blu-ray. The region's film and bonus features Blu-ray discs were packaged alongside a small, cardstock Kylo Ren standee (approx. 5.5 in. tall and 3.5 in. wide at the widest flare of his cloak), within a black case with hero cover art that resembled the interior of the American Walmart exclusive version's flap. The release then had a slipcover over it with its artwork taken from Rey's character poster.



TFA (South Korean Blu-ray, 2016)

South Korea also simultaneously saw what we might call a “basic” SteelBook release in light of what came shortly thereafter. This initial SteelBook was simply an international, language independent version of the standard TFA SteelBook design, making it essentially identical to those we’ve already seen from the UK and Japan. This release essentially combined the other two South Korean releases’ discs by including the film Blu-ray, bonus features Blu-ray, and Region 3 film DVD in the same package. This SteelBook was slightly more elaborate than many of its international counterparts by including a lenticular magnet to cover the spine that would replace the character portraits with the film’s English title against a lightsaber image that shifted from red to blue, plus a PET (polyethylene terephthalate) slipcover that featured the film’s logo in English on the front and Kylo Ren’s character poster image on the back.





TFA (South Korean Blu-ray, DVD, 2016)



Lenticular spine magnet on SteelBook – Lightsaber color shifted (red to blue).

Two months later, on June 17, 2016, a new round of South Korean releases arrived, courtesy of a company called NovaMedia, who were a frequent source of exclusives on the South Korean market (along with competitor KimchiDVD, whom we will see later). As part of their Nova Choice product line, NovaMedia released *three* different variations of TFA SteelBooks that were a bit more elaborate than America's Best Buy exclusive. All three were numbered as part of the product line (NC 009).

The first was the lenticular version, which featured the international, language independent version of the standard TFA SteelBook within a slipcover that featured the same poster art (version B) as the interior case art for the standard, American, multi-format version, but this time the artwork was lenticular for a nice 3D effect. Opening the SteelBook revealed fairly impressive content: the film on Blu-ray; the Blu-ray bonus features disc; the film on DVD (Region 3); and several bonus items. A small clear package included four 5.63 in. x 3.69 in. art cards with images from the film, along with four 2.31 in. x 3.56 in. glossier cards with images of Rey, Finn, Kylo Ren, and BB-8. A small (4.29 in. x 5.88 in.) gallery book with BB-8 on the cover was also included, featuring images and information about the film in both Korean and English. Each copy was individually

numbered on its slipcover out of a limited edition of only 800 copies produced.



TFA (South Korean Blu-ray, DVD, 2016) –  
NovaMedia Nova Choice Lenticular Edition



Art cards (both sizes)

The second NovaChoice (NC 009) release was the so-called “Full Slip A” version. This edition included the same SteelBook, discs, and art cards (both types) as the lenticular version, but the gallery book was larger (5.31 in. x 6.75 in.) and placed alongside the SteelBook in its slipcover, rather than put inside the SteelBook itself. The slipcover featured poster art of the main characters (with Kylo Ren central to the artwork), known as version C, on the front, while the back featured BB-8. This version was also individually numbered on its slipcover, this time out of a limited edition of

only 600 copies.



TFA (South Korean Blu-ray, DVD, 2016) –  
NovaMedia Nova Choice Full Slip A version

The final Nova Choice (NC 009) release was the Full Slip B version, featuring all of the same contents as Full Slip A, but with a different, non-lenticular slipcover. This time, the *Millennium Falcon* was featured on artwork that wrapped around for one continuous image from back to front. Like Full Slip A, this version was individually numbered on the slipcover out of a limited edition of 600 copies.





TFA (South Korean Blu-ray, DVD, 2016) –  
NovaMedia Nova Choice Full Slip B version

Each of the Nova Choice copies also came with the spine magnet and PET slipcover that was available for the initial SteelBook release, though they were provided outside of the releases' slipcovers.

Fans seeking to purchase all three could submit a “one click” (i.e. all items with a single purchase) order to receive them with matching limited edition numbers (found on the bottom of each slipcover). Otherwise, there was nothing special about ordering these South Korean TFA exclusives together or separate.



Limited edition number (found on bottom of slipcovers) –  
This was Full Slip B, hence the “FB” after the product number at the top.

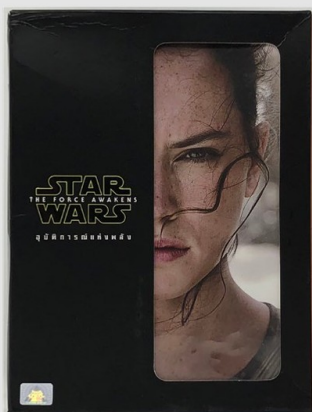
### Meanwhile in Thailand (2016)

I'll admit that I typically don't look to Thailand for *Star Wars* home

video releases. It simply isn't a region I've delved into very often. However, a TFA item released in Thailand on June 29, 2016, was an interesting contrast to certain promotional themes seen in places like the United Kingdom.

Often, when an exclusive home video release (usually a limited edition SteelBook) was sold by Zavvi in the UK, there would be an offer to bundle it with the purchase of a tee-shirt for a discount. I have never considered these shirts to be home video bonus items, as they have always been simply something offered at a discount to those purchasing a home video item, not a free bonus item, preorder incentive, or part of the actual home video item itself.

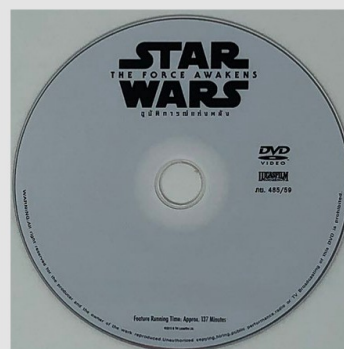
The lines between clothing and home video blurred in Thailand for TFA, however, as one of its versions of TFA was a special boxed set that bundled a tee-shirt with the film on DVD. The outer packaging was a somewhat bulky, black, cardboard affair that featured the film's title in English (with its Thai subtitle beneath) on the left side of its cover, while the right side was dominated by a window of clear plastic. The top flap again bore the title, while the sides featured the wide Rey and Kylo Ren promotional art sometimes seen in theaters as large banners. The back of the box was primarily another clear, plastic window that provided a glimpse at the included tee-shirt.



TFA (Thai DVD, 2016)



Tee-shirt (unopened)



Disc label

Opening the box revealed the tee-shirt, which was simply the film's standard, English logo on a plain black shirt in clear wrap, taking up most of the space, pressed against the rear "window." Pressed against the front "window" was a thin, cardboard DVD package with a front image of the Rey character poster (allowing basically half of Rey's face to show through the window) and a similar back to most DVD-only releases of the film. Folding the front flap out once to the left revealed the Kylo Ren character poster image on another flap. Once that second flap was folded to the right,



the disc was revealed, held against a background composed of the wide version of the artwork used for the standard American DVD-only release and many others. (This was known as the “version B quad” poster art.) The disc itself was as plain as could be, simply a white background with only the film’s English logo, Thai title, and other relevant information, without any other artwork. While not marked as such, one would assume that the DVD itself was Region 3, a DVD region it shared with South Korea and other East and Southeast Asian nations (most notably *not* Japan).



Disc folder (interior)



Disc folder (exterior) – Note the Rey and Kylo Ren images that could “look” through the clear plastic window on the outer box to change appearances.

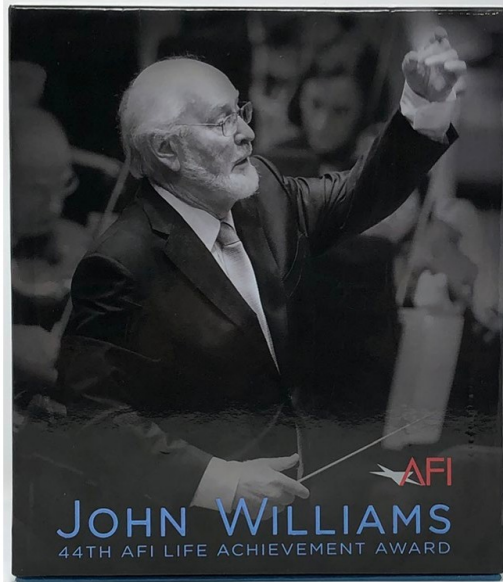
It was an unusual release, at least for those most familiar with western home video market.

### Honoring the Maestro (2016)

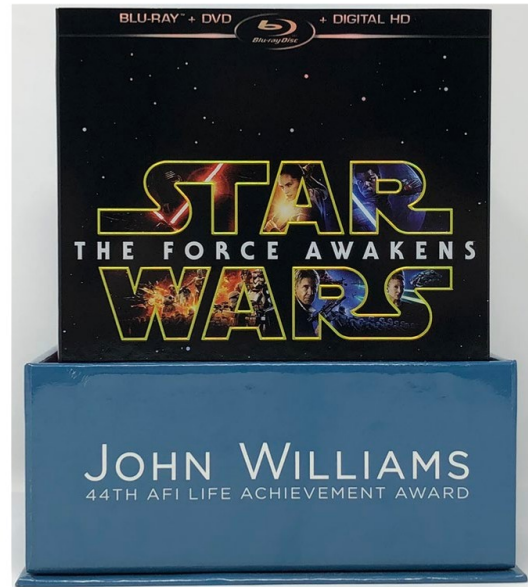
In 2005, George Lucas had been honored as the 33<sup>rd</sup> recipient of the

American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award. As you may recall from the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I*, a particular tier of guests at his award ceremony on June 9, 2005, received a boxed set of many of Lucas' films on DVD inside a special acrylic case (itself in a bag with other goodies), which has become one of the rarest *Star Wars* home video items. What even those aware of that set often do not realize, though, is that there is another such rare AFI Life Achievement Award boxed set out there that includes *Star Wars* films...

On June 9, 2016, 11 years to the day after Lucas' received the honor, the 44<sup>th</sup> AFI Life Achievement Award ceremony was held. This time, the honoree was none other than legendary composer John Williams (affectionately referred to as "the Maestro"), whose ceremony was hosted by Steven Spielberg, who had also hosted Lucas' event in 2005. As with every recipient as far back as at least Barbara Streisand in 2001<sup>19</sup>, a boxed set of the artist's works was made available to top-tier attendees at the ceremony.



*John Williams: 44<sup>th</sup> AFI Life Achievement Award* (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016)



Interior view (lid removed, viewed from one side)

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<sup>19</sup> The recipient of the award in 2000, the year prior to Streisand, was Harrison Ford. While I can confirm that Streisand had a VHS set of her works made available at her ceremony, I have yet to see any evidence that such a set exists for Ford. If one did, it almost certainly included *Star Wars* films.



Williams' films were included in a nice package made of thick cardboard, rather than an acrylic box, making it far less prone to being accidentally damaged or destroyed than Lucas' package. In keeping with the times, Williams' set was all Blu-ray film releases, rather than DVD as they had been for Lucas 11 years earlier. (Some did include DVD or digital copies, but the primary disc of each release was Blu-ray.) Two entries represented *Star Wars* in the set, the first release of each of what were now seen as the two major periods of *Star Wars* films: the Lucas era and the Disney era. *A New Hope* was included in its 2015 limited edition SteelBook release, while *The Force Awakens* was included in its recent (Apr. 2016) standard, multi-format release (with slipcover).

The other nine films in the set provided a wide swath of musical styles and film genres, but all featured an iconic John Williams score. These included: *Superman: The Movie* (Blu-ray, 2006); *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Blu-ray, 2007); *Saving Private Ryan* (Sapphire Series Blu-ray, 2010); *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Blu-ray, 2011); *ET: Anniversary Edition* (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2012); *Schindler's List: 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Limited Edition* (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2013); *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*<sup>20</sup> (Blu-ray, Digital, 2013); *Jaws* (Blu-ray, Digital, 2014); and *Jurassic Park* (Blu-ray, Digital, 2015).

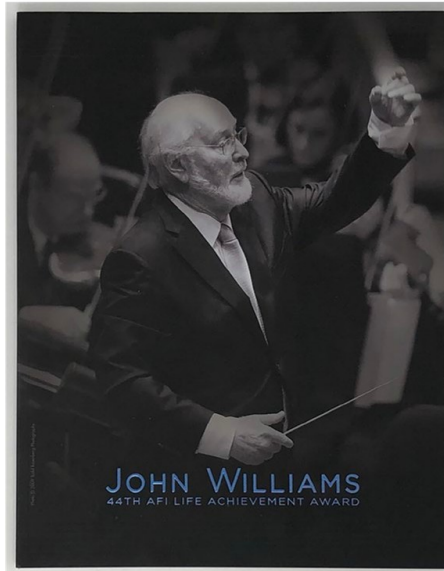


Included Blu-ray releases (listed in the preceding paragraph) – Notice the *Star Wars* releases: ANH SteelBook (Blu-ray, 2015) and TFA (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016)

<sup>20</sup> Yes, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* became *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* to match the other films in the series back in 1999 for a VHS reissue. While that updated title is irksome to many, look at it this way: at least they didn't try to celebrate Williams by including *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.



Fans seeking out this set should also keep an eye out for the special program book provided to all attendees of the ceremony.



*John Williams: 44<sup>th</sup> AFI Life Achievement Award* (2016)

### **Blu-ray in Threeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee-Deeeeeeeeeeeee! (2016)**

Seven months after *The Force Awakens* premiered on home video, a landmark new release of the film arrived. This was the Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment Blu-ray 3D release that had been promised by the official *Star Wars* website back in Mar. 2016.

*Star Wars* films had existed in 3D for four years already. *The Phantom Menace* had received a theatrical re-release on Feb. 10, 2012, after undergoing a 3D conversion process. *Attack of the Clones* was shown in 3D at the second *Star Wars* Celebration Europe convention in Germany in July 2013. The same year as TFA's 3D release in theaters, the entire *Prequel Trilogy* (including *Revenge of the Sith* for the first time) had been screened in 3D at *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim in Apr. 2015. The entire *Prequel Trilogy* existed in 3D and had been publicly displayed, but no Blu-ray 3D releases had yet arrived or even been announced, despite frequent internet rumors that they were "coming soon." To this day, they remain unreleased on home media.<sup>21</sup>

Fans were concerned that the first *Sequel Trilogy* film would not see Blu-

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<sup>21</sup> The 4K scans that were made while producing 3D versions of the films became the basis for the 2019 4K Disney+ versions of the films (and their subsequent home media releases). See the chapter *All Together Now*.

ray 3D either, but the single line about a later 3D release that was slipped into the original TFA home video announcement gave reason to hope.<sup>22</sup>

It is worthwhile to take a moment to discuss the concept of Blu-ray 3D and theatrical 3D in modern filmmaking. A three-dimensional viewing effect is produced through what is known as stereoscopy, a method of providing a different image to each eye so that our brains then combine those slightly different images into a single perceived visual, just like how the slightly different positions of our eyes create depth perception for regular sight. In the past, the most well-known stereoscopic 3D method was a style known as anaglyph, wherein two different, opposite-colored lenses (usually red and cyan) filtered out lines of those colors, leaving the opposite color viewable to each eye. This was where classic red and “blue” (cyan) 3D comic books and 3D glasses with red and “blue” lenses came from.

Today, we have escaped the realm of anaglyph 3D and now tend to use either unpowered, polarized lenses (e.g. RealD 3D in theaters) to filter out every other line of resolution in a film for each eye, or powered glasses with a “shutter system” to very quickly block each eye’s view as a film rapidly switches which eye’s content is being presented. Glasses-free 3D, known as autostereoscopy, was also briefly somewhat common in portable form, thanks to the Nintendo 3DS handheld video game system (2011 – 2020), which used autostereoscopic 3D (with the unfortunate downside of a rather limited viewing angle). Most movie theaters use polarized lenses (usually RealD 3D) for 3D films, while the methods employed by 3D televisions and projectors for home use vary. Thankfully, Blu-ray 3D discs are designed to work regardless of the type of stereoscopy employed.

The issue of compatibility also plays a role in how 3D films are made today. Filmmakers have two options: actually shoot their film “in stereo” (i.e. with expensive 3D equipment) or shoot the film normally and have it put through a conversion process later that turns a “normal” 2D production into a 3D movie. For a short time, the former option was more common, but as the conversion process has been improved over the years, the bulk of 3D films are now shot in 2D and then converted to 3D. This allows 3D conversion after the fact to accommodate different 3D standards like RealD 3D or Dolby 3D in theaters, while also being far less time-consuming and expensive for films heavy in special effects, which would otherwise have to be created in 3D for movies shot in 3D. Such conversion

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<sup>22</sup> After all, home video collections are built on hope.

also allows even older films, such as *Top Gun*<sup>23</sup>, which were never intended for 3D viewing, to still receive Blu-ray 3D releases.



Examples of stereoscopic 3D eyewear – RealD 3D polarized glasses (left); R2-D2 RealD 3D glasses from TLJ 3D theatrical release (top center); anaglyph red/cyan 3D glasses (bottom center); and Sony 3D shutter system glasses for use with the PlayStation 3D Display (right)

The *Prequel Trilogy* films were all shot in 2D and converted to 3D, which is likely no surprise, given when they were made. However, the same was also the case for the *Sequel Trilogy* and anthology (*A Star Wars Story*) films, a decision probably made in light of the extensive effects work necessary for a typical *Star Wars* movie. Fortunately, whether a movie is shot in 3D or converted to 3D later, it makes no difference for home media, as both types can be presented on a Blu-ray 3D disc, which is a form of Blu-ray disc that is typically triple-layered (100 GB).

### **Spectacles for the Spectacle (2015)**

#### ***The Force Awakens***

Another “distinction without a difference” for home 3D viewing emerged from the use of passive RealD 3D for some home 3D setups. This allowed collectible *Star Wars* RealD 3D glasses from theatrical releases to be used at home months later for Blu-ray 3D viewing by fans with compatible, passive 3D televisions or projectors. As such, we will examine these collectible pairs of RealD 3D glasses in this volume, just as we did with the *Prequel Trilogy* RealD 3D glasses in *Volume I*.

For *The Force Awakens*, theater chains like Cinemark were able to provide four different pairs of RealD 3D glasses from CDM Company, designed to

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<sup>23</sup> This was actually a pretty nice Blu-ray 3D experience. No joke!

represent different TFA characters. Like their predecessors, each would bear the Real-D 3D logo on one temple (right this time instead of left), while the other temple (left) bore the film's logo, similar to the Darth Maul TPM glasses provided by theaters in 2012. Designs included: Kylo Ren; Captain Phasma; stormtrooper; and BB-8.



TFA RealD 3D glasses (2015) – CDM Company set  
Top row: Kylo Ren (left) and Captain Phasma (right)  
Bottom row: BB-8 (left) and stormtrooper (right)



Kylo Ren design (left temple)



Captain Phasma design (left temple)





Stormtrooper design (left temple)



BB-8 design (left temple)

As with the theatrical 3D release of TPM in 2012, Look3D also produced 3D glasses for TFA. This time, the company produced two pairs, which appear to have been available mostly outside of the U.S. These were Look3D's own bulkier takes on Kylo Ren and stormtrooper designs.



TFA RealD 3D glasses (2015) – Look3D set  
Kylo Ren (left) and stormtrooper (right)



Kylo Ren design (left temple)





On Nov. 15, 2016, *The Force Awakens* became the first *Star Wars* film to be released on home video in 3D, via the Blu-ray 3D format. Truth be told, players that could handle Blu-ray 3D discs had penetrated far more American homes than had 3D televisions or projectors to use them. This was due primarily to the PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One video game consoles being able to play Blu-ray 3D.<sup>24</sup> This made the *3D Collector's Edition* of *The Force Awakens* a bit of an unusual purchase for many consumers. They would be buying it more for new bonus features than for the primary purpose of the release, which was ostensibly to allow the film to be watched in 3D at home. Would new bonus features alone prove to be worth the purchase, especially if one had already bought a multi-format pack earlier that year?

The good news for completists this time around was that the TFA *3D Collector's Edition* did *not* have multiple retailer exclusive versions to hunt down. Instead, only one variant beyond the standard version was produced: a package found exclusively at Walmart, the only unique feature of which was a single 6.63 in. x 5 in. lithograph of concept art for the film's final duel. Otherwise, all copies of the package (at least in the U.S.) were identical.

The American release of the *3D Collector's Edition* included four discs, one more than the original release. Given the propensity for companies to put out Blu-ray 3D packages with the same regular Blu-rays and DVDs as in other (usually simultaneous) releases, one could be excused for expecting this edition to have just repackaged the same discs as the Apr. 2016 multi-

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<sup>24</sup> Each console enabled this feature through a firmware update. For PlayStation 3, this came in 2010, four years after the console's launch. It arrived in 2014, the year after launch, for the other two.

format release with a Blu-ray 3D disc added into the package. (Surely we had gotten used to the same discs being reissued over and over again on DVD and Blu-ray.) Fortunately, the span of months between this release and the previous one allowed this package to break from the norm, replacing both regular Blu-rays with newly-authored discs that included extra content. (The DVD disc stayed the same.)

The updated Blu-ray discs each featured a new label, which was the easiest way to determine which disc a particular release included. The first disc replaced its original label featuring the *Millennium Falcon* on Jakku with a new label sporting a shot of T-70 X-wings on Takodana. The second disc replaced its label with a lower half focused on the TFA table read with a new label (still black on top with an image beneath it) that showed director J.J. Abrams in conversation with Harrison Ford. (The bonus disc's image was in color, which would be an important distinction four years later.)



2016 TFA disc comparison –

Top row: Blu-ray 3D; Apr. film Blu-ray; Apr. bonus features Blu-ray

Bottom row: DVD; Nov. film Blu-ray; Nov. bonus features Blu-ray

The first updated, regular Blu-ray disc included the film itself, this time with a J.J. Abrams audio commentary that had been conspicuously absent from the original release. (The commentary was not on the Blu-ray 3D disc or DVD, just the new 2D film Blu-ray disc.)

The second updated, regular Blu-ray was of special note in doing something unprecedented for *Star Wars*. First, it added two new sound-based featurettes and a pair of entirely new deleted scenes. Second, it also included *all* of the previous release's bonus content, including the previously-exclusive Target and iTunes digital featurettes and the extra



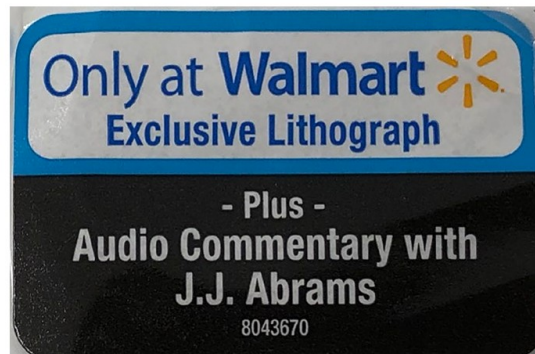
deleted scene from Disney Movies Anywhere. (The inclusion of the platform-specific, digital exclusives sometimes led sites to claim that the package included *five* new featurettes and *three* new deleted scenes, which was true from a certain point of view: that of someone only comparing what was on the *physical discs* for the Apr. and Nov. 2016 releases.)



TFA 3D Collector's Edition (Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2016)



Walmart exclusive lithograph



Sticker denoting Walmart exclusive

This was a Hutt's wealth in bonus features, but it was not the sheer volume of material that was of greatest note. This was new release of a film that had already been on home video, and instead of just replacing old

bonus features with new ones<sup>25</sup>, dropping all (or nearly all) bonus content entirely<sup>26</sup>, or just repackaging the exact same discs<sup>27</sup>, the *3D Collector's Edition* had added several new bonus features *without removing a single one* from the previous release.

This move was immediately criticized and praised, often in equal measure. On the plus side, this was the first time since bonus features began being added to *Star Wars* home video releases that a fan could own *one* copy of a film and still have *all* of its video bonus features on physical media. The inability to do this had been a longtime complaint from fans who often repurchased the films for new bonus content, only to be unable to part with earlier copies without losing their previous bonus content.

The negative side, though, was also substantial. By re-releasing all of the Apr. 2016 version's content, even items that were previously digital exclusives, in the Nov. 2016 *3D Collector's Edition*, those original versions from earlier that same year had been rendered redundant. Unless one kept copies due to packaging variants, there was no need to own a single earlier copy, since everything (and more) had just been presented in the new, updated package.

Of course, the greatest contribution to the evolution of *Star Wars* home video made by the *3D Collector's Edition* was the inclusion of a Blu-ray 3D copy of the movie, regardless of the percentage of consumers who were actually able to use it. This groundbreaking disc's label featured a shot of Kylo Ren stalking at night on Starkiller Base with his lightsaber ignited.

Packaging for the set featured a folding inner case with interior art of the *Millennium Falcon* entering hyperspace with a rathtar still on its viewport, as seen from inside the cockpit. This fit into a slipcover with a black frame (labeled "Collector's Edition" in gold at the top) that contained a lenticular image of Rey's hand holding up her ignited lightsaber, next to the film's title

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<sup>25</sup> Examples include the transition from *The Definitive Collection* on LaserDisc in 1993 to the *THX Remastered Edition* LaserDiscs in 1995, or the reissue of film DVDs from the 2004 *Original Trilogy* set without their original bonus disc in 2006 with new bonus discs that held the "unaltered" versions instead.

<sup>26</sup> Examples include the transition from the 2004 to the 2005 DVD releases of the *Original Trilogy*.

<sup>27</sup> Examples include the same film discs being used for the original *Prequel Trilogy* DVD releases and the boxed set in 2008, or the repackaging of *The Complete Saga* from 2011 in 2015.



with “3D” beneath it. Digital content redemption was handled through two different slips this time. One slip included a small cutout of BB-8 that would be removed to reveal its code, which unlocked the original digital content from the Apr. 2016 release. It read, “Leave the disc at home... Take this digital movie wherever you go.” A separate slip, featuring a still of Rey and Finn from the film, included a code to unlock the *3D Collector’s Edition*’s additional content.

Unfortunately, it became clear shortly after TFA’s 3D release that *Star Wars* came to Blu-ray 3D too late to be a solid selling point to boost retail sales of 3D televisions. After being introduced as a new television feature in 2010, 3D home viewing never really caught on enough to sustain itself within the American market. Vizio, Inc. stopped selling 3D TVs in 2013, and Samsung killed the feature on their own sets in 2016, shortly before TFA hit Blu-ray 3D. Just two months after TFA’s *3D Collector’s Edition* arrived, the last two major companies producing TVs with 3D capabilities, Sony<sup>28</sup> and LG, announced in Jan. 2017 that they were dropping the feature from all new televisions.

That is not to say that it isn’t possible to make use of a Blu-ray 3D disc today. For many 3D enthusiasts, home theater projectors have become a solid alternative to televisions, and some projectors still support 3D viewing. Sony also released a firmware update for their PlayStation 4 video game console on Mar. 9, 2017, which enabled the ability to play Blu-ray 3D content via its PlayStation VR (virtual reality) peripheral for a solitary (but enjoyable) viewing experience.<sup>29</sup>

Broadly speaking, this was one of the strongest *Star Wars* home video releases in years and certainly on par with the best single-film releases for the saga up to that point.

### **Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2016)**

On Oct. 31, 2016, (two weeks *before* the U.S. release on Nov. 15), TFA’s

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<sup>28</sup> Sony was a strong supporter of home 3D viewing, having incorporated Blu-ray 3D capabilities into their PlayStation 3 and 4 game systems (and the PS4’s PlayStation VR add-on), along with 3D play on the PlayStation 3 for a handful of games. For them to call it quits on 3D televisions was the clearest possible death knell for the format in America.

<sup>29</sup> As of the publication of this guide, Blu-ray 3D playback is not available on the Xbox Series X, nor on the version of the PlayStation 5 with an optical disc player.

*3D Collector's Edition* launched in the UK. Again, no DVD or digital code was included, just the updated film and bonus Blu-ray discs, along with the Blu-ray 3D film disc, all of which were region-free. Just as Blu-ray/DVD combo packs were not the norm in the UK as they were in America, nor were 3D releases that included DVD and digital copies with Blu-ray 3D and Blu-ray copies. (To be fair, Blu-ray 3D releases in the U.S. often included Blu-ray and digital copies, but DVDs were not as consistently included.)



TFA 3D *Collector's Edition*  
(UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2016)

With J-card

The UK would also see a standard Blu-ray 3D/Blu-ray release of TFA in a regular Blu-ray case. This version differed from subsequent *Star Wars* 3D releases in the UK by denoting the contents in a yellow (rather than red) area above the cover art, which resembled that of the *3D Collector's Edition*.



TFA (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2016)

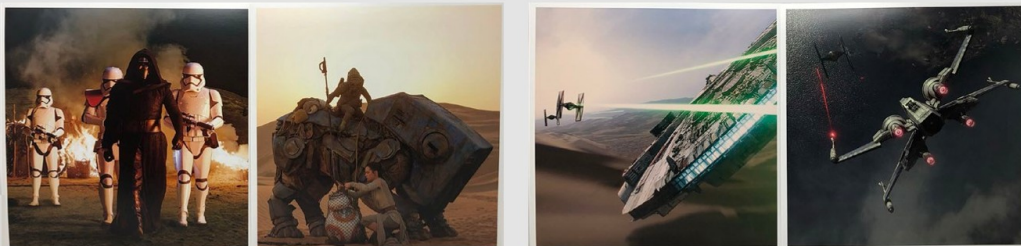
The first time the UK finally received a copy of TFA that included a DVD with its Blu-rays (but still not a digital copy) was with the late 2016 release of the so-called *Big Sleeve Edition*, a format that featured packaging about the size of a vinyl LP record (approx. 12.38 in. square) with BB-8 cover art resembling the Walmart exclusive Apr. 2016 U.S. release. The back cover used the familiar IMAX poster art, while the interior shared the “*Millennium Falcon* going into hyperspace” art from the *3D Collector’s Edition* interior. The package also included four exclusive “art cards” (12 in. square prints) of stills from the film. Oddly, this release included the updated film and bonus feature Blu-ray discs from the UK version of the *3D Collector’s Edition* but not the Blu-ray 3D disc, having swapped it for the DVD.



TFA *Big Sleeve Edition* (UK Blu-ray, DVD, 2016) – with J-card



Disc labels



Art prints





Interior



Exterior

### Meanwhile in Malaysia (2016)

While we are on the subject of Blu-ray 3D releases of TFA, we should note an interesting packaging choice out of Malaysia. That region saw a release with similar content to the UK release (Blu-ray 3D and Blu-ray film discs, plus the Blu-ray bonus features disc, but no DVD or digital copy). What set this version apart was how those discs were housed.

Rather than simply using a single Blu-ray case, such as the UK used for their standard release, the Malaysian release in question held the two regular Blu-rays in a case of their own with a “virgin” (i.e. no lettering of any kind) image of Kylo Ren with stormtroopers on the front, while the back showed Finn and Rey during the escape from Niima Outpost. The spine included the film’s title and standard iconography. The Blu-ray 3D disc was provided in an entirely separate Blu-ray case, which featured the Starkiller Base duel on the front and the “Chewie, we’re home” moment on the back. This



time, the spine included a large “3D” after the film’s title.

Both cases were then held within a cardboard slipcover with art that resembled the UK standard release.



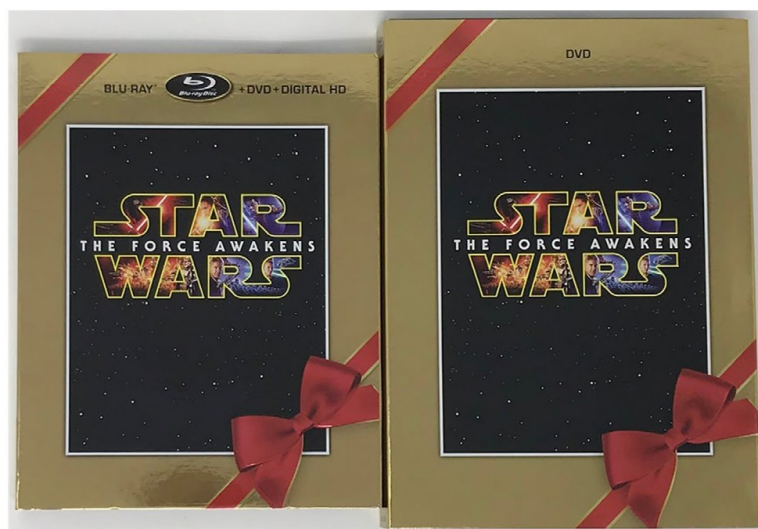
TFA (Malaysian Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2016)

It was an unusual (to American eyes) segregation of media formats in a single, region-free release.

### Buy It Again... For Christmas! (2016)

Another pair of *The Force Awakens* releases arrived just in time for the holiday season around early Dec. 2016. These were a pair of Walmart exclusive (again) versions of the original multi-format and DVD-only releases from Apr. 2016. (Yes, these were the old, now substandard, Blu-ray discs.) Each included their respective discs in their regular Blu-ray or DVD cases and bore a new slipcover that showed artwork similar to the regular Apr. 2016 multi-format slipcover, this time bordered in gold with a red bow to provide the appearance of a wrapped gift.

These seem to have gone mostly unnoticed by collectors at the time, and discerning *Star Wars* fans likely skipped them in favor of the more bonus-rich *3D Collector's Edition* that had been released less than a month earlier.



TFA 2016 holiday packaging – Blu-ray, DVD, Digital (left) vs. DVD (right)  
This was the only American DVD-only release of TFA to come with a slipcover

### Spectacles for the Spectacle (2016)

#### *Rogue One*

Like with TFA, *Rogue One* had RealD 3D glasses based on the film, which were available from CDM Company (via most standard U.S. channels) and Look3D (mostly internationally).

The CDM Company set consisted of just three, rather than four, pairs this time. These were themed after the Rebel Alliance, a death trooper, and a stormtrooper (again). Unfortunately, the Rebel and death trooper glasses were somewhat thinner than most other *Star Wars* RealD 3D glasses produced both before and since, resulting in being quite a bit more fragile as well. The stormtrooper design, meanwhile, was just a *Rogue One* version of the TFA pair. Glasses again included the RealD 3D logo on the right temple and the film's normal logo (*Rogue One* with a box around it and *A Star Wars Story* at the bottom) on the left temple.



TFA RealD 3D glasses (2016) – CDM Company set  
Left to right: Rebel; death trooper; stormtrooper



Rebel design (left temple)



Death trooper design (left temple)



Stormtrooper design (left temple)

For their part, Look3D again released only two designs, both of which, just like with TFA, were based on characters that also existed in the CDM Company set: a death trooper and a stormtrooper. However, the added bulk of the Look3D glasses allowed the death trooper pair to be far less fragile than its CDM Company counterpart. The stormtrooper pair had a minor redesign as well, so that it was not quite the same as the TFA pair, even disregarding film logos. Speaking of logos, one should note that the Look3D glasses used a different version of the film's logo (the *Star Wars* logo with the film's title below it).





RO RealD 3D glasses (2016) – Look3D set  
Death trooper (left) and stormtrooper (right)



Death trooper design (left temple)



Stormtrooper design (left temple)

### ***Rogue One: A Home Video Story (2017)***

Eight days shy of the first anniversary of *The Force Awakens* in theaters, Disney's second live action entry into the saga, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, arrived to thrill movie-goers on Dec. 10, 2016. Like TFA, *Rogue One*'s turnaround time to arrive on home video was relatively short. The film premiered on digital platforms on Mar. 24, 2017, followed by physical releases 11 days later on Apr. 4 (a gap of one week more than that between TFA's initial digital and physical releases). This beat TFA's live action record of only 105 days between theatrical and digital release by one day,

but TFA still beat *Rogue One* to physical media, as TFA took 109 days while *Rogue One* took 115.<sup>30</sup>

This would be a moment of truth for Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment. We had seen how they handled *The Force Awakens*, but how would they handle *Rogue One*? Had any lessons been learned, and what effect would the end of 3D television production have on our chances for a Blu-ray 3D release of the first “anthology” film?

Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment’s approach to *Rogue One* somewhat mirrored aspects of the TFA home video launch, while managing to avoid the “double-dipping” frustrations brought about by the TFA *3D Collector’s Edition* the previous year.

The most basic physical release of *Rogue One* was a DVD-only package, which included no bonus features whatsoever, nor a digital copy, though a code was included to redeem for Disney Movie Rewards points. This DVD release’s case art featured the *Rogue One* team on the Scarif beach with a transparent Vader mask and Death Star overhead. The disc label featured Jyn Erso and Cassian Andor on Jedha. This DVD-only release, as with TFA in its initial release, did not include a cardboard slipcover. Its DMR code slip featured similar art to the case.



RO (DVD, 2017)

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<sup>30</sup> *The Clone Wars* film’s record of 88 days between theatrical and physical/digital release was not yet broken, but it would be in the coming years.



A standard, multi-format release was widely available. This package included a Blu-ray copy of the film, a Blu-ray of bonus features, a DVD copy identical to the one in the DVD-only release, and a code to redeem for a digital copy of the film with all of its bonus features and Disney Movie Rewards points. This release featured a cardboard slipcover with the main characters featured against a Death Star backdrop, over a standard, blue Blu-ray case (differing from TFA's black case) with identical artwork. The Blu-ray film disc featured art of stormtroopers wading in the water on Scarif.

The bonus features Blu-ray included *Rogue Connections* (a short featurette on links between *Rogue One* and other *Star Wars* productions) and a series of 10 featurettes under the heading of *The Stories*, each of which focused on a particular concept, character, or pair of characters in the film (*A Rogue Idea*; *Jyn: The Rebel*; *Cassian: The Spy*; *K-2SO: The Droid*; *Baze & Chirrut: Guardians of the Whills*; *Bodhi & Saw: The Pilot and the Revolutionary*; *The Empire*; *Visions of Hope: The Look of Rogue One*; *The Princess & the Governor*; and *Epilogue: The Story Continues*). The bonus features disc label was a photo of the filming of Jyn taking cover during the Jedha shootout.



RO (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017)

The digital copy (and DMR points) code slip for the film was similar in design to the “regular” content code slip from the *3D Collector's Edition* of TFA. Rather than simply a standard slip with the code, the regular-sized slip featured a Scarif beach backdrop (part of the version A poster artwork) with encouragement to “take your movie to go,” but the actual code was on



the back of a smaller card attached to the slip that featured the DVD case artwork, the film's logo, and the label "digital movie." Artwork on the two parts of the code slip were not designed to line up, so it presented a rather odd visual when the code card was still attached to the slip.

Identical discs to those in the standard, multi-format pack were also released in a Walmart exclusive version with a different slipcover. This exclusive packaging, which featured K-2SO on the front, could be folded out to reveal the team wading in water on the Scarif beach. This provided a consistent style between Walmart's Apr. 2016 variant of TFA and this Apr. 2017 variant of *Rogue One*. Walmart upped the ante a tiny bit as well, including two *Galactic Connexions* game discs in the package, rather than just one, along with a Topps promo card (*Heroes of the Rebel Alliance*) for the *Rogue One: Series 2* trading card set.



RO (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017) – Walmart exclusive



Walmart exclusive  
(Velcro section opened)



Walmart exclusive Topps  
promo card and *Galactic  
Connexions* trading game discs

Both Target and Best Buy took their exclusives to a new level for *Rogue One* by being the only ways fans in the U.S. could acquire a Blu-ray 3D copy of the film, the disc label of which featured Darth Vader aboard the *Profundity* with his lightsaber ignited. With 3D televisions no longer in production, 3D projectors still available but not widely used, and the number of stores in the U.S. still carrying Blu-ray 3D films on the decline, fans wondered whether *Rogue One* would get a 3D release at all. Those hopeful for a 3D release were thrilled to see their fears of no *Rogue One* 3D release unfounded, and many applauded Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment for making the 3D version available alongside the film's initial home video release, rather than staging a staggered pair of releases in the vein of TFA. That said, the fact that the film could only be purchased in 3D at two American retailers served to ignite new worries (which proved to be well-founded) that 2017's *The Last Jedi* might not receive a Blu-ray 3D release in the U.S. at all when it hit home video in 2018.

Best Buy's exclusive version of *Rogue One* presented the same discs and code slip as the standard, multi-format package, along with the film's Blu-ray 3D disc, all within a SteelBook case. Rather than focusing on a single character for this SteelBook's cover, the *Rogue One* SteelBook's artwork included Imperial troopers on the Scarif beach (death troopers on the front and stormtroopers on the back), thereby completely breaking the pattern of all previous *Star Wars* SteelBooks in the U.S.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> One has to wonder if Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment just got tired of people griping about how TFA's SteelBook didn't quite match up with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment SteelBooks from 2015 and decided to do



RO (Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017) – Best Buy exclusive



Best Buy exclusive SteelBook (exterior)

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something *completely* different for RO.





Interior

Target, meanwhile, added a *fifth* disc in an exclusive version of its own. This exclusive variant included the film on Blu-ray 3D, the film on Blu-ray, the Blu-ray of bonus features, the film on DVD, a digital copy (and Disney Movie Rewards) code, and an exclusive second DVD with two bonus featurettes not found on any other version of *Rogue One: Inside the Creature Shop* and *Digital Storytelling*. Strangely, the featurettes were a reversal of how the TFA Target variant had worked. For TFA, the two exclusive featurettes were digital-only, so there wasn't a physical copy of either one available until they were included within the TFA *3D Collector's Edition*. This time, the featurettes were on a physical DVD, but they were *not* included in the digital content unlocked by the release's digital copy code. (They would, however, be added to all digital copies automatically later, around the time of the film's Sept. 2019 reissue and Mar. 2020 4K release, neither of which would include the featurettes physically.<sup>32</sup>)

The Target variant's packaging was also unique in its physical design. It featured a mostly clear slipcover over a fold-out cardboard package (black on one side with a wide form of the version A poster art on the rest). The front "flap" that formed the cover of the package (visible through the slipcover) had an opening that allowed the owner to choose from among five different included international character poster images (on separate cards) to be featured as the variant's cover. Those pictures included: Jyn Erso (alone); Saw Gerrera and Bodhi Rook; Chirrut Imwe and Baze Malbus; Cassian Andor and K-2SO; and Orson Krennic with death troopers.

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<sup>32</sup> See the chapter *All Together Now*.

Absent some kind of premium boxed set, the Target version was America's superior version of *Rogue One*, bringing a customizable package, the Blu-ray 3D film, and the only exclusive video content for any of the movie's physical releases.



RO (Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017) – Target exclusive  
Cover image cards not shown (see below).



RO Target exclusive cover image cards



All five possible Target exclusive version appearances



### For a More Digital Age (2017)

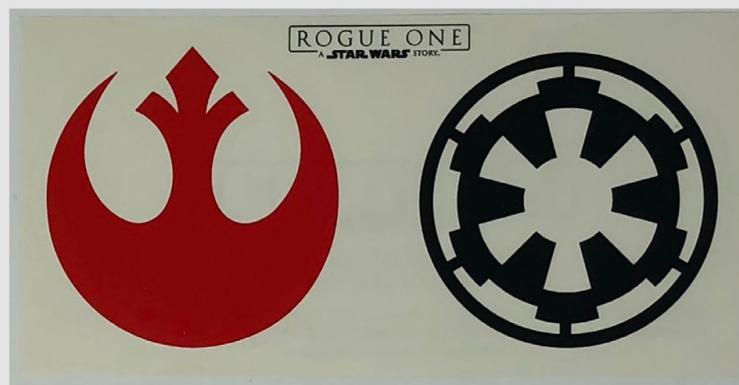
Just like with TFA, RO could be purchased online prior to its physical release. While there wasn't a physical folder of mini-posters offered for digital preorders this time, two platforms offered exclusive preorder bonuses. Fans who preordered via the PlayStation Store received *Rogue One* themes for PlayStation 3 and 4 consoles. Those preordering digitally through Amazon Video received two digital comics: the first issues of *Star Wars* and *Darth Vader* from Marvel Comics (2015).

All digital preorder customers, regardless of platform, were also given immediate access to a featurette (maddeningly just called *A Star Wars Story*) featuring the cast and crew discussing the film. However, just like the Brazil Comic-Con video provided for preorders of TFA, this was just another video that had already been available for months on the official *Star Wars* YouTube channel, making it effectively meaningless as a preorder incentive.

Upon release, iTunes customers received access to exclusive still content. This came in the form of two picture galleries under the heading *Designing Rogue One*. The first featured 35 concept art images of the U-wing, while the second included 27 concept art images of K-2SO.

On Amazon Video, customers could view the film with an "X-ray" subtitle track that provided interesting trivia about the film.

While Disney Movies Anywhere did not offer any additional video content, anyone who purchased or redeemed a digital copy of RO through DMA were given access to an offer that allowed ordering of a pair of physical decals (Rebel and Imperial symbols, 3.57 in. in diameter), suitable for putting on laptop covers and the like, for "free" (with a \$0.99 shipping cost).



RO decals – Disney Movies Anywhere mail-away item

As was the case with TFA, the Disney Store (and online counterpart shopDisney) did not offer an exclusive variant of *Rogue One*, but those who preordered the regular DVD-only or multi-format version from the House of Mouse's outlets received a set of four large (14 in. x 10 in.) lithographs of



film stills in a protective folder that bore artwork similar to the multi-format release. Images included: Jyn Erso, Cassian Andor, and Baze Malbus prior to the Battle of Scarif; Cassian Andor with K-2SO; Chirrut Imwe with Baze Malbus; and Darth Vader with Orson Krennic.



Lithograph folder



2017 Disney Store lithograph seal



RO Disney Store and shopDisney preorder lithographs

Disney took things one step further, though, by also offering a different, much smaller (6.75 in. x 5 in.) lithograph, featuring stormtroopers on the Scarif beach, with purchase of the film (again in regular multi-format or DVD-only form) through the Disney Movie Club (DMC). The Disney Movie Club was a mail-order service (similar to Columbia House or BMG

for music-lovers in the 1990s) that offered new members the ability to purchase four movies for just \$1 with free shipping. Doing so then obligated the new member to purchase five more movies at regular price within the next two years. Each month, a catalog would arrive in the mail that included various items that could be ordered. One item each month was considered the “featured title.” If the member did not want that featured title, they needed to actively decline it (either online or by returning a slip by mail). A lack of response was treated as confirmation that the member *did* want the featured title and agreed to receive (and be billed for) that item.

For fans who were already purchasing numerous *Star Wars* releases, this was a decent deal, and it allowed preorders of the films, beginning with *Rogue One*, that would include these exclusive mini-lithographs. The service also offered *Star Wars* exclusive releases for *The Last Jedi* and *Solo* (as we will see in the next chapter) and sometimes had exclusive releases of Disney films that were otherwise unavailable (such as a Blu-ray release of the 1993 version of *The Three Musketeers*<sup>33</sup>). *The Force Awakens* had been available through DMC without any exclusive aspects, but *Rogue One* had opened the door to even more home video related items for collectors to hunt down.



Disney Movie Club mini-lithograph

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<sup>33</sup> One of my favorite films for sheer fun. Kiefer Sutherland's “Save the king!” line (and its musical cue, of course) still gives me goosebumps every time.





Example: Apr. 2017 Disney Movie Club mailer envelope (left) and catalog (right) *Rogue One* was the featured title, sent to members unless declined by Apr. 24, 2017.

### Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2017)

In the UK, *Rogue One* arrived on physical home media on Apr. 10, 2017, six days after its American physical release. The UK approach varied somewhat from that of the U.S.

First, a single-disc, Region 2 PAL DVD release was available, designed similarly to the American DVD-only release.



RO (UK DVD, 2017)

Second, a Blu-ray release was available with a limited edition slipcover that featured the film's IMAX poster art: an image of the Death Star with a triangular "slash" made of shadowy X-wings cutting down from the top to reveal the characters "inside" the slash. Within the slipcover was a typical, blue Blu-ray case with a cover similar to the standard, American, multi-format release containing the film and bonus features Blu-ray discs. (No DVD or digital code was included.)





RO (UK Blu-ray, 2017)

Third, a multi-format pack including the film on Blu-ray 3D and the two regular Blu-ray discs was available. This release's standard, blue Blu-ray case's artwork included a red area at the top that noted it as including the Blu-ray 3D disc. Otherwise, the cover was identical to the UK Blu-ray release's case (but not the slipcover). The slipcover for this version featured art that was essentially identical to that of the inner case with the exception of a thick red border/frame. Again, no DVD or digital code was included.



RO (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017)

Zavvi once again offered an exclusive SteelBook release, this time including all of the contents of the regular 3D package in a SteelBook that was essentially the same as the one offered by Best Buy in the U.S. (i.e. *with* English text on both cover and spine this time instead of a text-free cover or spine made of character portraits as in a multi-region release like the UK's TFA SteelBook).



RO (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) – Zavvi exclusive

The film also received a *Big Sleeve Edition*, this time on the same day as the other releases and exclusive to Tesco Extra big-box (“hypermarket”) stores. It was similar to the TFA *Big Sleeve Edition*, including the film Blu-ray, bonus features Blu-ray, a DVD copy (unlike the other Blu-ray releases), and four 12 in. square art cards (essentially larger versions of the character poster art cards from the American Target exclusive variant’s customizable packaging, except for Target’s Krennic and death troopers card). The jacket cover featured a variation of the art for Cassian and K-2SO with Cassian removed and extra ships added in front of the Death Star. The back artwork was similar to the SteelBook cover, but the two leftmost death troopers were removed, so that the two rightmost death troopers could be spread father apart in the same poses. The interior artwork consisted of stormtroopers running to the right on the Scarif beach from one of the film’s theatrical banners.





RO *Big Sleeve Edition* (UK Blu-ray, DVD, 2017) – Tesco Extra exclusive (with J-card)



Disc labels

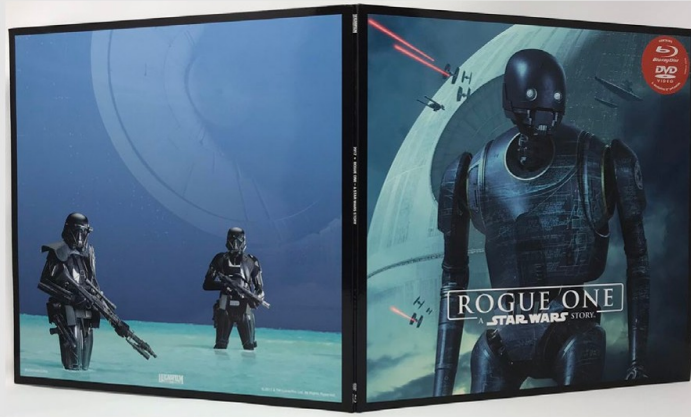


Art prints



Interior





Exterior

While not a variant home video product itself, UK Supermarket Sainsbury's offered a free paperback copy of the *Rogue One* junior novelization by Matt Forbeck to anyone purchasing any version of the film. The cover was the same as that of the American version.



RO junior novelization comparison – U.S. hardback (left) vs. UK paperback provided free with purchase of the film at Sainsbury's (right)

It is interesting to note here that while the U.S. releases pulled back from Blu-ray 3D and only offered that option as part of two retailer exclusive variants, the non-SteelBook Blu-ray 3D release in the UK was widely available. Only the SteelBook version of that package was a retailer exclusive. As we will see, the longevity of the Blu-ray 3D format in the UK would substantially outpace its viability in the U.S.

### Meanwhile in Japan (2017)

In Japan, *Rogue One* followed in the footsteps of TFA by receiving a MovieNEX *Premium Limited Box Edition* on Apr. 28, 2017.



RO *Premium Limited Box Edition* (Japanese Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017)

A nice, glossy (i.e. very reflective) box, adorned only with the film's logo against a starfield, opened to reveal an international, language independent SteelBook copy of RO that differed from the American version by lacking a cover logo and featuring character portraits instead of any particular written language on the spine. The SteelBook included the Blu-ray film disc, Blu-ray bonus features disc, and the film on DVD. (Unlike the U.S. SteelBook, a Blu-ray 3D copy was not included.) Beside it on this top layer of packaging was an exclusive Death Trooper Specialist action figure from S.H. Figuarts. For extra protection, the figure was within standard packaging, which was then placed within a dull-looking cardboard box, which was then made to look nice again by placing a cardstock cover over it while within the *Premium Limited Box Edition*.



Top layer within packaging, holding the SteelBook and Death Trooper Specialist (beneath its protective cover and within two boxes)

Top left: SteelBook

The S.H. Figuarts Death Trooper Specialist was packaged in its own regular box (top right), which fit into a protective cardboard box (bottom left), which was placed under a think cardstock cover (bottom right) when inside the *Premium Limited Box Edition*.



Beneath that top layer, a lower layer housed a plastic package that could be turned into a display stand for a set of included art cards (measuring approx. 7.19 in. x 10.06 in., the same size as those for TFA), featuring the film's title against a black background (similar to the film's version A poster but without its tagline), Vader aboard the *Profundity*, a “poster” style image (the same image used for the standard American Blu-ray release's cover art), and the same five character images as found in the Target exclusive American release.

As with TFA, the Blu-rays were Region A (compatible with American players), while the DVD was Region 2 (not compatible with American players, despite being NTSC). A digital code slip (redeemed via MovieNEX in Japan and bearing the same art as the U.S. DVD-only release) and advertising booklet (featuring the release date of TLJ and its Japanese logo prominently on its cover) rounded out the package.





Top: Steelbook (open)  
– Notice the portraits on spine and lack of a cover logo.

Center: MovieNEX  
digital copy code (left)  
and advertising  
booklet (right)

Bottom: Disc labels



SteelBook spine comparison:  
U.S. (left) vs. Japan (right)

Notice that both included the Lucasfilm logo at the top and Blu-ray symbol at the bottom. Regions like Japan (but not the UK this time) used the language independent variant that included character portraits (Jyn, Cassian, Bodhi, K-2SO, Chirrut, Saw, Baze, and Krennic) instead of any form of title (English or otherwise).



Art prints and frame  
(bottom center)

With a fancier S.H. Figuarts figure this time around, this was an improvement upon the TFA *Premium Limited Box Edition*, but the lack of a Blu-ray 3D copy rubbed some collectors the wrong way, given that such a disc was available in the American and UK SteelBooks.

### Meanwhile in South Korea (2017 – 2018)

In South Korea, it took a bit longer than in other regions to see a Blu-ray 3D release of *The Force Awakens*. The South Korean equivalent of the American or UK *3D Collector's Edition* finally arrived on Apr. 28, 2017 (the same day as the Japanese *Premium Limited Box Edition* of *Rogue One*). This release, labeled as the *2D + 3D Collector's Edition* (arguably a more accurate title than just *3D Collector's Edition*), included updated film and bonus feature Blu-ray discs, plus the film on Blu-ray 3D. It included a small envelope (designed as a starfield pattern with the film's English logo on the front and held closed by a circular BB-8 sticker) that held six cards (5.81 in. x 4.06 in.) with images from the film, along with a card that provided an

individual number for that specific copy as part of a limited edition of only 1,500 produced.

This initial *2D + 3D Collector's Edition* release featured a heavy slipcover with the classic “BB-8 and Rey from behind” IMAX poster image that we’d seen many times on posters and packaging, but it was altered so that they were not in front of the Jakku sun but instead against a night sky full of stars. The back featured the *Millennium Falcon* flying away from the viewer. Inside the slipcover was a folding package, similar to the American *3D Collector's Edition* in construction. Its interior featured the same view of the *Falcon* going to hyperspace from inside the cockpit as seen in the American release, while the opposite side’s three panels featured the character poster images for Rey, Finn, and Kylo Ren.



*TFA 2D + 3D Collector's Edition*  
(South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017)



Individually numbered card





Disc labels and interior case reverse (unfolded)



Art cards

So that we do not need to address it separately later, I should note here that there was a second version of this *2D + 3D Collector's Edition* that was *not* a limited edition. It was released 1.5 years later on Nov. 7, 2018. To distinguish the two versions, the original was referred to as the “digibook” version (though that seemed to be stretching the definition of a digibook), while the later, simplified version was referred to simply as the “normal version.” This standard version featured a similar slipcover design (the same cover art but slightly narrower and loading from top or bottom instead of the side) over a clear, regular Blu-ray case with lightsaber cover

art that matched the image within the “frame” of the U.S. and UK *3D Collector's Edition* (or the UK's standard packaging). Strangely, given that the film had premiered in theaters nearly three years earlier (and thus its final content was known with certainty), the image used for the interior of the case was a shot of Maz Kanata handing Leia the lightsaber that once belonged to Anakin and Luke... which was *not* in the finished movie, only in the film's trailers.



TFA 2D + 3D *Collector's Edition*  
(South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)

In the meantime, South Korea's *Rogue One* releases came in two separate bursts, one of wide releases and another with retailer exclusives.

The first round of RO releases in South Korea came on May 11, 2017. The most basic of these was a DVD-only release. The Region 3 DVD came in a standard DVD case with similar art to its American counterpart. It came with a slipcover (featuring version B poster art of the *Rogue One* team with Jyn larger above them against a Death Star behind her and Imperial forces on Scarif beneath them all). This release included an insert that opened to reveal character profiles in Korean over a small portion of beach artwork from theatrical poster version A. Like with TFA, the DVD's label was significantly different, featuring the *Rogue One* team in a character image used in many of the tie-in and promotional materials for the film. Unlike TFA (and subsequent films), the case, slipcover, and insert all featured the English logo with just a tiny Korean title beneath, more like the HD releases from South Korea than the other DVD releases (which had prominent Korean titles instead).





RO (South Korean DVD, 2017)



Insert (interior)

A standard Blu-ray version with film and bonus features discs came in a clear Blu-ray case with similar artwork to the American multi-format release. (Disc labels were also similar.) However, it then had a rather nice slipcover with the heroes and villains against a white background on the front (taken from one of the exclusive giveaway posters from AMC



theaters' IMAX presentations), while the back matched the front of the United Kingdom's Blu-ray slipcover front artwork (i.e. the regular IMAX poster). Since the Blu-ray case was clear, artwork was able to be shown beneath the discs. For this version, that art was the Rebels charging from the right toward the enemy on the Scarif beach, taken from one of the much larger theatrical banners for the film.



RO (South Korean Blu-ray, 2017)

A version billed as the “2D + 3D Combo” included the two Blu-ray discs, along with the film on Blu-ray 3D (with a similar label to the U.S.), within a clear Blu-ray case with art that featured the characters above an image of the Battle of Scarif (from the version B poster in markets like Mexico, similar but not quite the same as the tilted, American, version D poster art). This came in another white slipcover, this time with character and battle images emerging from the outline of Darth Vader’s helmet in profile on the front and rear artwork of the characters, Imperial AT-ACT walkers, and Jyn Erso looming above them (a second piece of AMC IMAX exclusive poster art). The interior artwork for the case insert, seen through the clear case, showed stormtroopers charging at the Rebels from the left on the Scarif beach, taken from the other large, theatrical banner for the film.



RO (South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017)

A fourth May 2017 release was, as one might expect, a SteelBook version. The SteelBook itself was essentially identical to the American version with the same discs as the “2D + 3D Combo” version. Similar to the original South Korean TFA release, a PET slipcover was also included, featuring the film’s logo against a black background with elements of the Death Star’s blueprints faintly visible.



RO (South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017)

Six months later, on Nov. 10, 2017, South Korean retailer KimchiDVD released a pair of exclusive, limited edition *Rogue One* SteelBook packages, labeled as “KimchiDVD Collection #13.”



RO (South Korean Blu-ray, DVD, 2017) – KimchiDVD exclusive Type A

The first of these (Type A or the Full Slip version) featured a slipcover with K-2SO artwork on one side and the film's title against a backdrop of Death Star blueprints (similar but not identical to the PET slipcover on the earlier SteelBook release) on the other. Inside the slipcover, the SteelBook was accompanied by a gallery book (partly in Korean, partly in English, featuring cover art of Jyn and Cassian running from the “camera” on the Scarif beach) and a blue envelope emblazoned with the film's title that held eight art cards (4.94 in. x 6.38 in.) of individual (rather than group) character images. (The images had Death Star blueprints lighting the characters' faces, earning this image set an appropriate name: the “schematic” series. They were individual posters in some Asian markets but often seen in the U.S. as parts of a single, larger IMAX standee in theaters.) The SteelBook was the same as before but included the film on Blu-ray, the Blu-ray bonus features disc, and a separate DVD that was labeled “Exclusive Bonus.” That DVD was simply a Korean (Region 3) version of the same DVD found in the Target exclusive release in the U.S., albeit with



a much more appealing label (the heroes running on the Scarif beach). Each copy's slipcover noted its individual number out of only 450 produced.



RO (South Korean Blu-ray, DVD, 2017) – KimchiDVD exclusive Type B

The second KimchiDVD exclusive version (Type B or the Lenticular Edition) included the same discs, SteelBook, gallery book, and art cards as the Type A version, all within a different slipcover. The slipcover featured lenticular artwork of the main characters with Jyn, the Death Star, and Darth Vader above them (sort of a hybrid of Jyn and the background from poster version B but the other characters from version C), while the non-lenticular back featured the heroes beneath the Death Star on the Scarif beach. Only 550 copies were produced of this limited edition, all of which were numbered on their slipcover.



Art cards

Fans seeking to purchase both of these KimchiDVD exclusives could use a “one click” order to acquire both with matching individual numbers but nothing else to distinguish that purchase from buying each separately.

### Across the Galaxy TFA on Blu-ray 3D (2016 – 2018)



A few TFA Blu-ray 3D releases from different regions –  
Top row (left to right): U.S.; UK (*Collector's Edition*); UK (standard)  
Bottom row: South Korea (limited edition); South Korea (standard); Malaysian

### Meanwhile in China (2017)

In China, *Star Wars* fans were treated to an impressive array of options for *The Force Awakens* from Blufans, one of the world's premiere producers of exclusive, limited edition SteelBooks that often included extra goodies.

On June 10, 2017, Blufans released a standalone (for lack of a better term), limited edition SteelBook for the film. This was a Double Lenticular Edition, which meant that the SteelBook and its goodies were packaged within a slipcover that had lenticular artwork on both the front and back sides. The red-themed front cover included the title in English and art focused on Rey and Kylo Ren with other characters to the right and below, while the blue-themed back included Finn, Chewbacca, Leia, Han, Starkiller Base, and other elements.<sup>34</sup> (This was essentially the art from the “version B quad” poster, but it was as if it had been split in half so that the left half became the front of the package, while the right half became the back – the opposite of if it had just been the full image wrapped around the slipcover.) The SteelBook inside was essentially identical to the one we’ve already seen from the UK and elsewhere, but since this was a release after the film reached Blu-ray 3D, it included the film on Blu-ray (with a substantially different label than other regions), the Blu-ray bonus disc, and the film on Blu-ray 3D. Both of the Blu-rays were the Chinese equivalent of the Apr. 2016 American discs. The Chinese label for the Blu-ray film disc included the English logo against a blue background on the left, the theatrical version B poster artwork on the right, and a giant “Blu-ray Disc” logo centered at the top. A black envelope with the film’s English logo held eight 6.38 in. x 5.13 in. cards with images from the film. The package was limited to only 1,000 copies, and each copy was individually numbered on a card, which used artwork from one of the film’s four AMC IMAX exclusive posters, that acted as the package’s back side while in shrink wrap. In collecting circles, such releases were often noted by their Blufans collection numbers. This was OAB (“Only at Blufans”) 40.

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<sup>34</sup> There were a *lot* of characters and other elements on these lenticular covers, but they had some of the best lenticular 3D of any lenticular cover art I’ve ever seen.

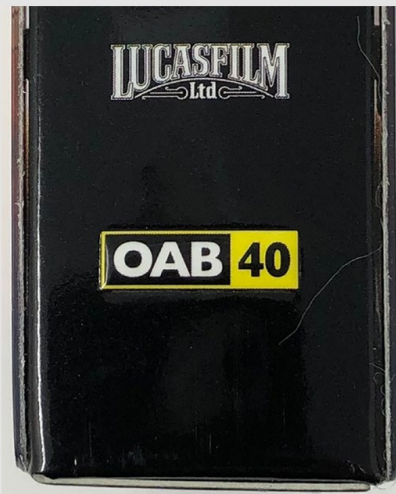




TFA (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) – Blufans exclusive



Back of slipcover (lenticular)



Spine number (OAB 40)



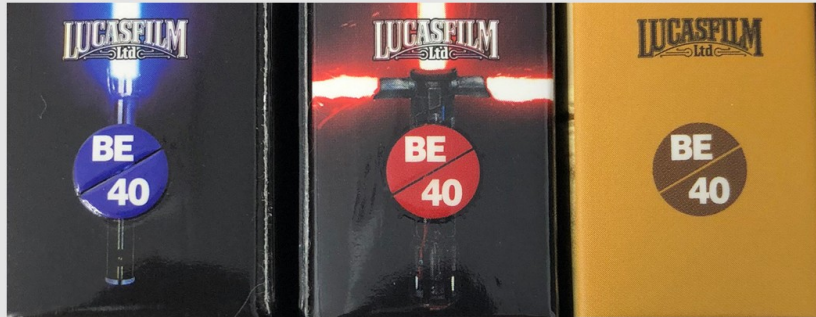
Disc labels



Art cards

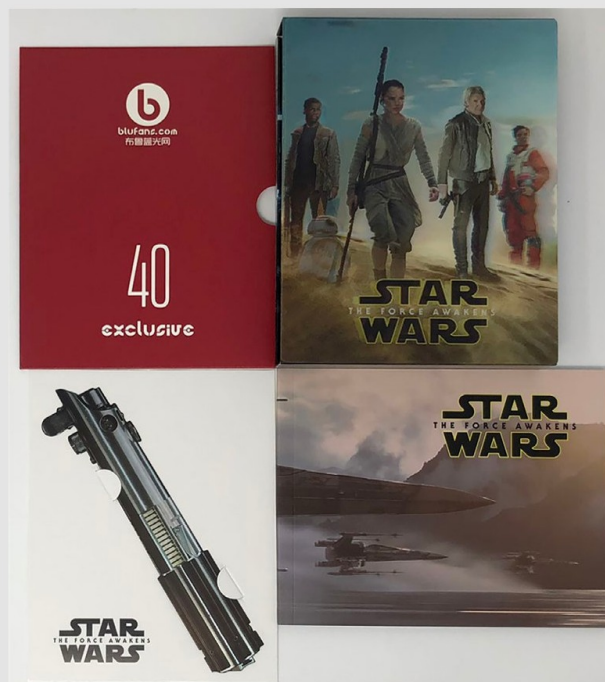
About six weeks later, on July 27, 2017, Blufans released *three* more exclusive versions of TFA, along with a special package that included all three (but *not* the release from June). All of these products were labeled BE (“Blufans Exclusive”) 40.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Yes, the original and later Blufans TFA releases shared the same number (40), but their designations within the Blufans collections were different (OAB vs. BE).



Spine numbers of all three July 2017 Blufans TFA releases (BE 40)

One of these was another Double Lenticular Edition, featuring the hero art we've previously seen inside the original Walmart exclusive U.S. release as its cover, along with the villain art (Kylo Ren, Captain Phasma, and General Armitage Hux) that we originally saw as part of the American Target exclusive's folding jacket as its back. The package included a photo book for the film (with cover art of the T-70 X-wings on Takodana) and, most importantly, an exclusive SteelBook that included updated film and bonus features Blu-ray discs (akin to the Nov. 2016 release in the U.S.), along with the same Blu-ray 3D disc as in the previous OAB release. Of greatest interest to collectors was the SteelBook itself, which was quite different from those in the rest of the world.



TFA (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) –  
Blufans exclusive Double Lenticular Edition

We should take a moment here to distinguish between two different



common designations for SteelBooks: WWA and WEA. “WWA” refers to “Worldwide Artwork,” which was what we typically saw with SteelBooks, as the same artwork was used in many releases across the globe, just perhaps with tweaks like changing languages or making a SteelBook language independent. “WEA” referred to “World Exclusive Artwork,” meaning that the SteelBook was not just an exclusive for that company in its particular region but instead exclusive to that company in the entire world.



Disc labels – Note the updated film and bonus features Blu-ray discs.



TFA Blufans exclusive SteelBook (exterior)



Interior

For this BE release, Blufans' SteelBook was a WEA version, featuring front cover artwork that used the version B theatrical poster (similar to the standard Apr. 2016 American multi-format release's interior case art), back artwork similar to the "framed" lightsaber image from the *3D Collector's Edition* in the U.S. (and elsewhere), and a shot of the First Order legions during Hux's speech in the film as the interior image. Only 1,700 copies of this Double Lenticular limited edition version were available, and each was individually numbered on the back of a cardboard lightsaber (Rey's) that was held on a card with the film's logo inside a cardboard jacket that doubled as the package's back cover (with disc stats, barcode, etc.) when still in shrink wrap. That cardboard jacket also included the individual number for that copy. A final piece that was included in this package when purchased individually was a wide, fold-out art card (31.88 in. x 6.81 in.) with the wide theatrical banner art of Finn on one side and Leia on the other.



Fold-out art card (Finn side)



Fold-out art card (Leia side)

The second BE 40 release included the same WEA SteelBook (holding the Blu-ray and Blu-ray 3D film discs but no bonus features disc), a sliver envelope of six character poster art cards (5.13 in. x 6.44 in.), and a similar cardboard lightsaber (Kyl Ren's this time) with the item's individual number in a similar jacket. This was the Single Lenticular Edition, meaning that only the front cover was lenticular (Kyl Ren's character poster image with the film's English title), while the back was a regular cover (Rey's character poster image). This version's fold-out art card featured theatrical banner art of Kyl Ren on one side and Han on the other. Only 900 copies of this version were available.



TFA (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) –  
Blufans exclusive Single Lenticular Edition





Art cards



Fold-out art card (Kylo Ren side)



Fold-out art card (Han side)

The third BE 40 release included the same WEA SteelBook and discs (i.e. film discs but no bonus features disc) as the Single Lenticular Edition, a different photo book than the BE 40 Double Lenticular Edition (with BB-8 on the cover this time), and a cardboard BB-8 with the individual copy's number inside a similar cardboard jacket that also bore the number. This was the Full Slip Edition, which meant that the contents were included within a slipcover, but neither cover was lenticular. This time, BB-8 was featured on the cover (giving it a similar feel to the original Walmart exclusive TFA release in the U.S.). The “Rey and BB-8 against the Jakku

sun” IMAX poster artwork provided its back cover. This version’s fold-out art card featured Rey on one side and Luke on the other. (The Rey side was identifiable again as theatrical banner artwork, but Luke was not.) As with the Single Lenticular Edition, only 900 copies of this version were available.



TFA (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) –  
Blufans exclusive Full Slip Edition



Fold-out art card (Rey side)





Fold-out art card (Luke side)



Back sides of July 2017 Blufans slipcovers –  
Left to right: Full Slip; Double Lenticular; and Single Lenticular

Fans who wanted to purchase all three of these BE 40 releases were given the opportunity through what was referred to as a One Click boxed set (i.e. something bought with one online purchase – one click – instead of purchases/clicks for each item). All three releases were stored within a nice, glossy box with the film's English logo on the front, images of Rey and Kylo Ren's lightsabers on either side, and legalese on the back, with all sides displaying their components against a starfield. The package was held closed by a magnetic flap and included a ribbon to make it easier to remove the items inside. The package included an exclusive art card holder, which contained the fold-out art cards from each of the three individual releases and four smaller (5.31 in. x 6.81 in.) art cards. Three of the art cards were the images found on the cardboard jackets (i.e. back covers while in shrink wrap) that each individual release had used to hold their limited edition numbered cards. The fourth was artwork from the similar "back cover while in shrink wrap" component of the June 2017 OAB 40 release. (Together, these were all four images from the exclusive AMC IMAX poster line.) Each of the three releases inside had identical limited edition numbers, adding some extra incentive for collectors to pick up all three in this form, rather than individually.





TFA One Click Set (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) – Blufans exclusive



Interior



One Click boxed set art cards with holder

### Foreshadowing of Destiny (2017)

In the chapter *All Together Now*, we will examine the impact of the sale of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox (and other 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox entertainment assets) to Walt Disney Company in 2019. Rumors that such a sale was coming, however, began as early as Nov. 2017. Could it be true? Could a deal be coming that would bring the distribution rights (both physical and otherwise) for all of the *Star Wars* live action films under a single company, paving the way for, among other things, giant boxed sets for the ever-

growing saga?

The possibility seemed perhaps too good to be true at the time, but the 2017 holiday season provided a strong hint that this might actually be in the works. At the very beginning of Dec. 2017, Walmart quietly released a new batch of exclusive holiday reissues of *Star Wars* home video products. We had seen this the previous year with reissued multi-format and DVD-only copies of TFA with gold-bordered “gift” slipcovers. This time, there were *seven* different holiday reissues at Walmart, and the nature of those items was something fans had not dared to consider possible until the rumors of Disney purchasing 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox began to circulate a mere month earlier.

Four of these reissued items were from Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment. The standard, multi-format versions of both *The Force Awakens* (Apr. 2016 discs again) and *Rogue One* were reissued with new slipcovers over their old interior cases. Each film's new slipcover was similar to the Walmart exclusive version from its original release, but rather than the featured droid (BB-8 or K-2SO) being a flap held closed by Velcro, this was a regular (i.e. no flap) slipcover that featured the same droid image with a new orange (TFA) or blue (RO) background.



TFA (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017) –  
Walmart exclusive



RO (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2017) –  
Walmart exclusive

Both TFA and RO also saw reissues of their DVD-only versions. For these, a new slipcover was *not* provided, but the DVD case artwork was swapped out for new artwork that resembled the new multi-format reissues' slipcovers.



TFA (DVD, 2017) –  
Walmart exclusive



RO (DVD, 2017) –  
Walmart exclusive

The other three reissued items were from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment. Two were the *Prequel* and *Original Trilogy* Blu-ray/DVD combo packs from 2013. The other was *The Complete Saga* Blu-ray set in its 2015 reissue form. For each product, the original interior packaging was intact, as was the original slipcover from that release. Then a *second* slipcover was placed over the first, providing new artwork. Yoda graced the new *Prequel Trilogy* slipcover with a green background, while a stormtrooper adorned the new *Original Trilogy* slipcover against a blue background. Rather than showing most of Darth Vader's body like on the 2015 slipcover beneath it, the new slipcover for *The Complete Saga* featured Vader in close-up against a red background. The new slipcover for *The Complete Saga* (but not the old packaging beneath it) also acknowledged that *Episodes I – VI* were no longer a “complete saga” by changing the set's name to the *6-movie Collection*.



## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



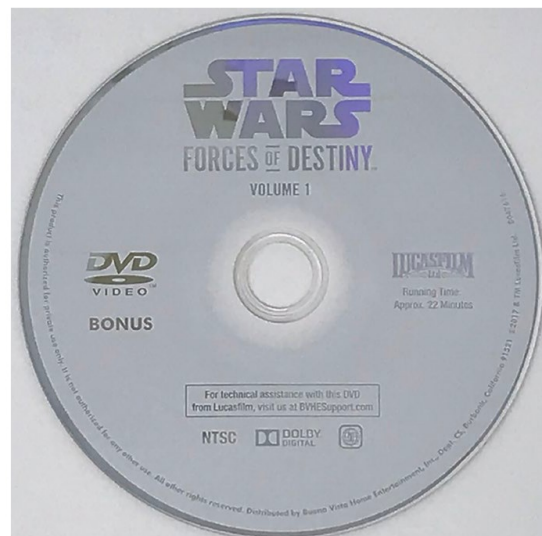
*The Prequel Trilogy* (Blu-ray, DVD, 2017) – Walmart exclusive



*The Original Trilogy* (Blu-ray, DVD, 2017) – Walmart exclusive



*6-movie Collection* (Blu-ray, DVD<sup>36</sup>, 2017) – Walmart exclusive



*Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* (DVD, 2017) – Walmart exclusive pack-in item

<sup>36</sup> Only *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* was on DVD in this set. Don't get your hopes up for a Blu-ray/DVD combo pack for *The Complete Saga*. That's not what it was.

This by itself was unprecedented. The two companies had teamed up for simultaneous, Walmart exclusive reissues of existing products, and they had actually coordinated the artwork on the new slipcovers (or case art for the DVD-only releases) so that they all had a uniform style. That would have been enough to set collectors' heads spinning, but one other major aspect of these seven reissues broke all previous precedent.

Each release included one extra DVD, which was found in a simple, single-disc jacket, held within the shrink wrap against the product. That DVD included *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1*.

*Forces of Destiny* was a series of short animated tales (similar to the *Clone Wars* 2D micro-series<sup>37</sup> but not connected into a larger story, though some episodes did connect). The series was released through both the Disney Channel on television and Disney's official YouTube channel. The second episode of *Forces of Destiny*'s first season ("BB-8 Bandits") had premiered on Apr. 14, 2017, at *Star Wars* Celebration Orlando.<sup>38</sup> The first season of 16 episodes then ran on the Disney YouTube channel from July 3 – Nov. 1, 2017, followed by a second season of 16 episodes from Mar. 19 – May 25, 2018. (Airing on the Disney Channel typically followed days or weeks after the YouTube premiere of a given episode, but it was a bit haphazard.) Four times in the series' run, eight episodes at a time were collected and given a framing story featuring Maz Kanata to link them all together into a special that ran about 23 minutes on YouTube or 30 minutes (with commercials) on the Disney Channel, where the collected volume premiered before arriving online. These four "volumes" of the series premiered on Oct. 1 and 29, 2017, and Mar. 25 and May 25, 2018, respectively.

The first of these collected versions, *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1*, included eight episodes from the first season: "Sands of Jakku;" "Newest Recruit;" "The Stranger;" "The Starfighter Stunt;" "Bounty of Trouble;" "Tracker Trouble;" "Ewok Escape;" and "Teach You, I Will." As with the *Ewoks* cartoon "movies" that edited episodes together in seemingly random order<sup>39</sup>, these were (in order) *Forces of Destiny* episodes 1, 9, 7, 12, 8, 10, 3, and 11. Fortunately, the series was not designed to be chronological, and the Maz Kanata framing story of her sitting around telling these stories about people who were "forces of destiny" made the random order a non-issue.

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<sup>37</sup> See the chapter *Gendy Goes Micro* in *Volume III*.

<sup>38</sup> This was the one *Star Wars* Celebration that my wife and I attended.

<sup>39</sup> See the chapter *Teddy Bears, Towanis, and Trouble Again* in *Volume III*.

By the time that the 2017 Walmart exclusive holiday reissues hit store shelves, the first season of *Forces of Destiny* had aired, along with its two collected volumes. The second season was still months away. Now, just over two months after *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* had premiered on television, it was being provided as a bonus DVD in *Star Wars* home video products from *both* Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment (which made sense, given that *Forces of Destiny* was a Disney production) *and* 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment (which evinced an unprecedented level of cooperation between the two companies).



Sticker noting Walmart exclusive *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* bonus DVD

The fact that the two corporate rivals had coordinated a release was one thing (and enough to turn heads), but packaging a Disney *Star Wars* home video item with a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox *Star Wars* home video product? That was mind-blowing.

Granted, these reissues did have their negative aspects. None of the products we were ostensibly buying were really new (since the *Forces of Destiny* disc was a bonus item, not technically the retail product in question). The reissues were not advertised or announced, and they were only in stores for a short time, making them particularly difficult to find, especially after the fact. The *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* copy included was on DVD, rather than Blu-ray, making YouTube (and later Disney+) a superior way to view the cartoon. Even worse (though more a matter of perception in retrospect than intention at the time), fans were disappointed to find that this was to be the only physical home video release of any *Force of Destiny* episodes (whether collected into volumes or individually) to date, rather than the first of several. That left *Forces of Destiny* as yet another *Star Wars* cartoon series with an incomplete physical home video collection. Still, all of these frustrations paled in comparison to the sheer shock and excitement generated by the idea that 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and Disney had finally collaborated on a *Star Wars* home video release. Even if Disney didn't



purchase 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox eventually, perhaps there was still hope for a big boxed set of all of the live action films anyway. Time would tell, but a new hope had been born.

**Changes for Better and/or Worse:**

***Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* (2017)**

As originally released, each individual episode of *Forces of Destiny* began with the series' logo forming against a starfield with a shot of Tatooine's twin suns within the letters of the *Star Wars* portion of the logo. Maz Kanata tells the audience, "The choices we make, the actions we take, moments both big and small, shape us into forces of destiny." This would then lead directly into that episode's individual story without any further framing from Maz. The end of each episode simply cut off once the story was over and faded to black, without presenting any credits whatsoever.

For the collected *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* (the only FOD item to find its way to physical media and thus the only one relevant to this sidebar), the familiar opening plays, followed by a new framing segment with Maz on Takodana, speaking directly to the audience (i.e. "breaking the fourth wall"). After some setup comments from Maz, "Sands of Jakku" plays, followed immediately by "Newest Recruit" and "The Stranger." At that point, another framing segment with Maz plays. This launches viewers into another string of uninterrupted episodes: "The Starfighter Stunt," "Bounty of Trouble," and "Tracker Trouble." Another new segment with Maz plays, followed by the final two collected episodes, "Ewok Escape" and "Teach You, I Will." Maz then returns for a final comment to the viewer, and the collected episode finally ends with credits for the entire production, which had been entirely absent from the original episodes.

Future volumes would follow very similar patterns, though the fourth volume had what was by far the best framing story, in which Maz must outwit Hondo Ohnaka.

**Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2017)**

In the UK, reissues also emerged in late 2017, but these were nowhere near as groundbreaking or surprising as those in the U.S. Instead, these were just reissues of the original 2016 TFA and 2017 *Rogue One* Blu-ray and DVD releases. Each of these four releases was simply the original release in a new slipcover, though that did mean that the UK's 2017 DVD reissues had slipcovers, whereas the U.S. had eschewed slipcovers in lieu of new case art. For each product, the new slipcovers were similar to the earlier, American, Walmart exclusive, multi-format releases, but these were flat, standard slipcovers instead of having the droids on the slipcovers fold

outward. Unfortunately, the *Forces of Destiny, Vol. 1* DVD that proved to be such a noteworthy bonus item for the U.S. reissues was entirely absent from the UK reissues, as were the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment contributions to the American reissue lineup.



TFA (UK Blu-ray, 2017)



RO (UK Blu-ray, 2017)



TFA (UK DVD, 2017)



RO (UK DVD, 2017)

### Meanwhile in China (2017)

In China, *The Force Awakens* had seen an initial release from Blufans in June 2017, followed by a July 2017 trio of releases (plus a boxed set to hold those three). For *Rogue One*, Blufans mirrored their approach to TFA's July releases from just five months earlier, but they did not produce anything equivalent to the June 2017 standalone TFA release.

Thus, there were three individual releases of *Rogue One* from Blufans, along with a boxed set version of all three. All were apparently released on Dec. 31, 2017.<sup>40</sup> We will find that there were only three *Star Wars* films to receive this treatment before licensing issues scuttled plans for any further releases. Of those three films (TFA, RO, and TLJ), I would argue that the RO set was the nicest among them.

Like with TFA, the three options for this release were a Double Lenticular Edition, a Single Lenticular Edition, and a Full Slip Edition. Each was labeled BE (“Blufans Exclusive”) 41 and contained an embossed, WEA (World Exclusive Artwork) SteelBook. The SteelBook’s cover art featured version B poster art with the Scarif beach battle at the bottom cut off. That art continued to the spine, which included the film, Blu-ray 3D, and Lucasfilm logos. The back cover featured the version A poster art. The interior art featured Chirrut Imwe and Baze Malbus on the left, K-2SO behind the spine, and then Jyn Erso and Cassian Andor on the right in an image similar to the South Korean gallery book cover art.



RO Blufans exclusive SteelBook (exterior)

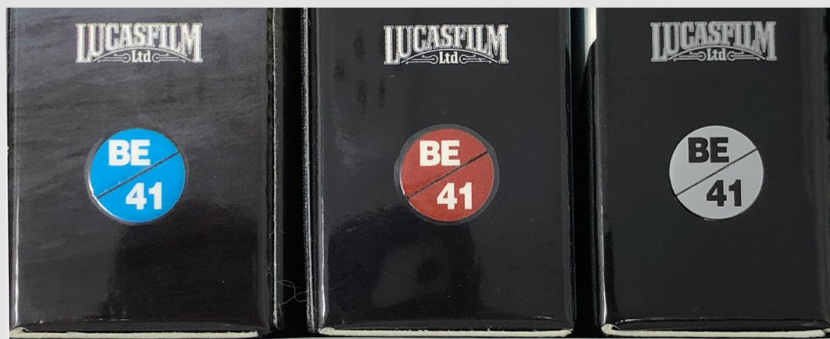
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<sup>40</sup> I’m skeptical of this date, but that’s what is listed on *Blu-ray.com*.





Interior



Spine numbers (BE 41)

Film disc labels (both Blu-ray and Blu-ray 3D) were similar to those found in the U.S., while the Blu-ray bonus features disc (found only in the Double Lenticular Edition) had an entirely different label with artwork similar to the American, standard release cover art.



Disc labels

The Double Lenticular Edition included all three discs. The front side featured a lenticular image (poster version D) of the team in front of the Death Star with the Battle of Scarif depicted below, along with the film's English logo. The back featured a lenticular version of the artwork used for the U.S. DVD-only release. This version included a textless photo book with cover art showing stormtroopers in the water of Scarif beneath the English logo. (This was essentially the same art as the back of the WWA Steelbook but with the stormtroopers, who were posed the same, spread out a bit more.) When in shrink wrap, the back cover was blocked by a cardboard folder with a similar image and details about the film. Once removed from shrink wrap, the reverse side of the folder was revealed to denote the film's "BE 41" number. It then opened to reveal an image of the Imperial forces on Scarif (from the bottom part of the version B poster art that had been cut off for the Blufans SteelBook) and an embossed stormtrooper cutout that could be removed. That specific copy's limited edition number was found on the back of the stormtrooper cutout, denoting that copy as one among a limited edition of only 1,500 produced.



RO (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) –  
Blufans exclusive Double Lenticular Edition

The Single Lenticular Edition included only the Blu-ray and Blu-ray 3D film discs (no bonus features disc at all). Its lenticular cover featured shifting international character poster images of either Jyn, Chirrut, or Cassian in front of the Death Star and various starfighters, while the film's logo and a Rebel Alliance starbird symbol dominated the lower quarter. The back cover, which was not lenticular, featured poster art (which in the U.S. promoted AMC Dolby Cinema) of Imperial forces in the background and a discarded Rebel helmet in the foreground that cast a Rebel Alliance starbird symbol as its shadow against the water. Rather than an art book, this version included eight 5.13 in. x 6.38 in. art cards of the “schematic” character poster images. Each card featured a single character from just below the neck upward with the Death Star blueprints projected onto one side of the character's face, with the film's logo and Rebel starbird in the bottom quarter (similar to that of the cover art). Characters included: Jyn; Chirrut; Baze; Cassian; K-2SO; Krennic; Bodhi; and Saw. These came in a black envelope with only the film's logo and a small Lucasfilm logo on its front. Like with the Double Lenticular Edition, the cardboard folder used as the back cover when in shrink wrap acted as a folder for each copy's individual number. This time, the folder's inner art was a shot of the death troopers on Lah'mu, and the embossed cutout used for the individual



copy's number was a death trooper. For this Single Lenticular Edition, only 950 were produced.



RO (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) –  
Blufans exclusive Single Lenticular Edition



Art cards

The Full Slip Edition included only the film discs, similar to the Single Lenticular Edition. Its cover featured the same artwork as the limited

edition slipcover available on the UK Blu-ray release (i.e. the IMAX poster), while the back featured the Rogue One team slinking through a Scarif base corridor (an image used as a teaser poster in places like South Korea). This version included a white envelope with gold film and Lucasfilm logos, which contained four more 5.13 in. x 6.38 in. art cards. The artwork on the cards included all four of the IMAX posters from the U.S. (i.e. the standard IMAX poster and all three of the exclusive posters from the AMC IMAX line) with the film's logo in English at the bottom. The cardboard item that mirrored the back artwork when in shrink wrap was again a folder, this time opening to reveal a different Battle of Scarif scene of Imperial forces with an embossed cutout of K-2SO. The cutout included each copy's individual number on the back out of a total of 950 produced.



RO (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) –  
Blufans exclusive Full Slip Edition



Art cards



Back sides of Blufans slipcovers –

Left to right: Full Slip; Double Lenticular; and Single Lenticular

All three of these limited editions were available with matching individual numbers in a One Click boxed set. The set included one extra item: a five-section foldout art card, measuring approx. 26.5 in. x 6.81 in., with the oft-used “Rebels running left” and “stormtroopers running right” Scarif beach artwork from the two theatrical banners on either side. This was held together by a small band with Imperial Scarif art and the film’s logo. What made this set so nice when compared to TFA and TLJ was its One Click box. It was stark white, *not* glossy (which meant it didn’t get marred by fingerprints as easily as TFA’s One Click box), and did not have any art on its top or bottom. The front featured the AMC IMAX “characters emerging from Vader’s helmet” image. The back featured the



triangular character AMC IMAX artwork with cast and crew information below. Either spine featured a red Rebel Alliance symbol and gold Lucasfilm logo. One of those spines was, of course, part of the flap to close the box, which extended to include the rest of the flap (the part that folded over the back and magnetized closed), which was adorned with the film's logo in gold.



Fold-out art card (Rebel side)



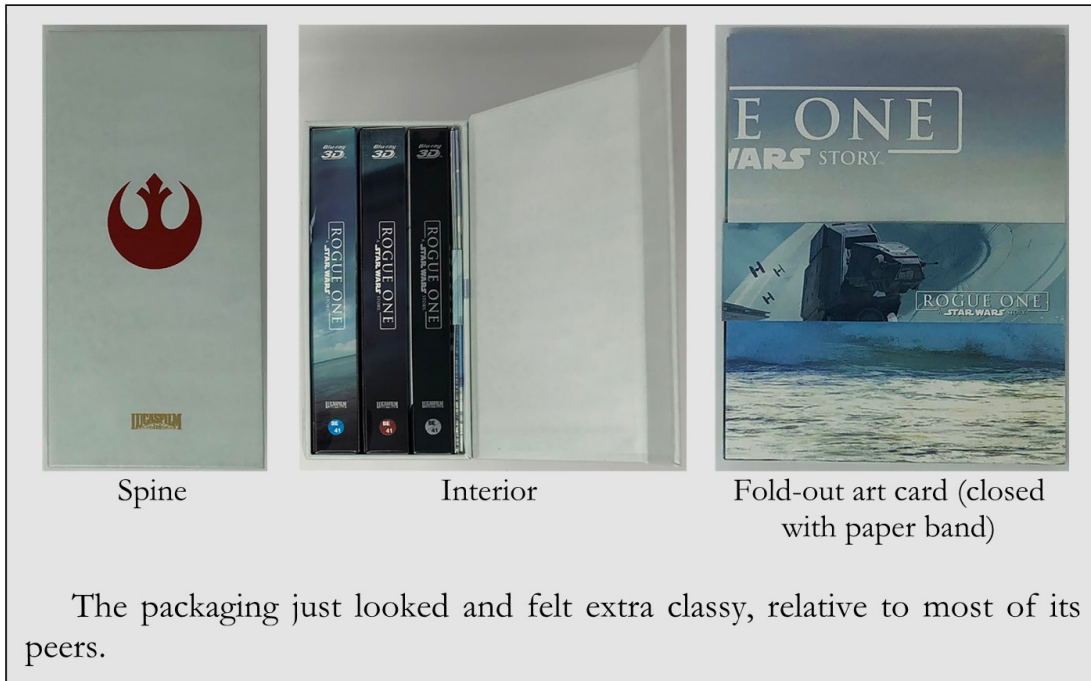
Fold-out art card (Imperial side)



RO One Click Set (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2017) – Blufans exclusive (open)



One Click box reverse (open)



### Conclusion: New Era, New Rules

Fans who wondered how Disney would handle *Star Wars* home video releases got their answer, at least for new live action *Star Wars* movies, in 2016 and 2017. Old rules were being thrown out and replaced by practices more in line with the times. Digital copies were finally standard inclusions with Blu-rays. Multi-format “combo packs” of Blu-ray, DVD, and digital copies became the norm. Blu-ray 3D releases were finally on the table (though not for long). Re-releases could add bonus content without taking any away. This seemed to portend a strong future for Disney *Star Wars* releases on home media. Sure, the practice of allowing multiple retailer exclusive versions could be frustrating to completists and collectors, but this was a common occurrence in the American market. For now, it seemed to be limited to just three U.S. retailers (Walmart, Target, and Best Buy), while three others (Disney Movie Club, Disney Store, and the online “Disney Store,” shopDisney) offered exclusive bonus lithographs without exclusive home video variants of their own (for now). Having two wide releases of TFA in a single year (ostensibly to launch 2D and 3D products separately) was widely regarded as a misstep, but Disney seemed to have listened to fan complaints so that *Rogue One* arrived simultaneously in 2D and 3D.

The unprecedented collaboration of Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment for the Walmart exclusive holiday reissues in 2017 had given hope of future cross-company products (or that rumors claiming Disney would soon purchase 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox from its parent company were true). We would still have a

while to wait, but the possibilities were intriguing.

Of course, other questions lingered just as a similar ones had in the years leading up to 2011. When would *Star Wars* films “get with the times” and arrive in 4K via Ultra HD Blu-ray releases? Even more importantly to collectors in the age of digital media, for how much longer would the *Star Wars* films see physical releases at all?





## 8 RISE OF 4K, DEMISE OF 3D (2018)

By the time *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* reached American homes in Apr. 2017, the home video market was already in the throes of another major shift. As had so often been the case, *Star Wars* releases took a while to catch up to the newest media trends (though not terribly so this time). The home video releases of the next two theatrical *Star Wars* films, *The Last Jedi* and *Solo: A Star Wars Story*, would serve to bring the saga more into line with the shifting home media landscape, much to the delight of those eager to experience *Star Wars* content with even greater clarity but to the intense frustration of fans who enjoyed watching *Star Wars* content in 3D at home. It was the era of the rise of *Star Wars* films on 4K Ultra HD Blu-ray and the end of the films on Blu-ray 3D... at least in the United States.<sup>41</sup>

### Ultra HD at Last (2018)

Just as DVD was a vast improvement over VHS, and then HD media like Blu-ray were another great improvement over DVD, Ultra HD was the next technological leap forward.

The 4K or Ultra High Definition (UHD or more commonly “Ultra HD”) video resolution raised the ante for picture clarity by leaping past the 1080p (1920x1080) resolution of full HD to a new standard of 3840x2160 resolution. This doubling of both horizontal and vertical lines created an

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<sup>41</sup> Help us, foreign Blu-ray 3D markets! You’re our only hope!

image that was *four times* the resolution of full HD.<sup>42</sup> The format was named after its horizontal, rather than vertical, dimension of 3840 lines (around 4,000 or “4K”).<sup>43</sup> The type of optical discs that carried the format were commonly known as Ultra HD Blu-rays (though some referred to them as 4K Blu-rays, which was an accurate description but not their actual name). These discs were essentially enhanced versions of traditional Blu-rays, offering either 50 GB or 66 GB on a dual-layer disc or 100 GB on a triple-layer disc. Unlike DVD, Blu-ray, or Blu-ray 3D discs, Ultra HD Blu-rays were *not* region coded and therefore could play anywhere in the world.

Most 4K content also featured HDR, which stood for “high dynamic range” and referred to available color range (the steps of difference between the darkest blacks and brightest whites). The most common HDR option, which the Blu-ray Association required all Ultra HD Blu-rays to be able to use, as of Feb. 2016, was known as HDR10. Dolby Vision, another HDR option, was generally considered the superior choice from among the several HDR formats available, but, as we will see, *Star Wars* would have a mixed history with Dolby Vision.

The first Ultra HD Blu-ray release from Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment had been the Marvel Cinematic Universe’s *Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 2* on Aug. 22, 2017. The second outing of Starlord’s band of misfits in space made its 4K debut with multiple variants, including an impressive Best Buy exclusive release that included the film on Blu-ray, Ultra HD Blu-ray, and Blu-ray 3D in a single SteelBook. Optimistic *Star Wars* fans hoped for a similar treatment for the saga’s next film, *The Last Jedi*. Unfortunately, that was not to be. The days of live action Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment films being released in 3D for home viewing in the U.S. were over before *The Last Jedi* even hit store shelves.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For comparison: 480i SD had 345,600 visible pixels; full HD 1080p had 2,073,600; 4K had 8,294,400. That’s *twenty-four times* the resolution of standard definition sources like the *Star Wars* releases of the 1980s, 1990s, and most of the 2000s.

<sup>43</sup> Every once in a while, you might see “Full HD” (1920x1080) listed as “2K” due to its 1,920 horizontal lines being close to 2,000, but it has usually been treated as something distinct from “true” 2K that is typically 2048x1080, 1998x1080, or 2048x858.

<sup>44</sup> On Mar. 6, 2018, just three weeks before the physical release of TLJ, the third *Thor* film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, *Ragnarok*, was released in the U.S. without a 3D version available. This was the first time since *Iron Man 2* in Sept.



### **For a More Digital Age (2017)**

Meanwhile, even as the home media environment was shifting toward 4K content and Ultra HD Blu-rays, the digital media landscape was constantly shifting with the rise and fall of digital media platforms, streaming services, and their digital brethren. On Oct. 12, 2017, just two months before *The Last Jedi* reached theaters, Disney's own digital platform, Disney Movies Anywhere, was rebranded and given a soft relaunch as Movies Anywhere (sans "Disney") as it expanded to include content from other studios.<sup>45</sup> DMA's ability to synchronize content with other providers like iTunes remained in place, making the new Movies Anywhere an essential part of fans' digital portfolios. *The Last Jedi* would be the first *Star Wars* film to be released with Movies Anywhere already in place.

### **Spectacles for the Spectacle (2017)**

#### ***The Last Jedi***

For TLJ, distribution of RealD 3D glasses returned to the release pattern of TFA: four from CDM Company in regular American distribution through theater chains like Cinemark and two from Look3D that were more common on the international market. As with TFA and RO, all featured the RealD 3D logo on their right temple and the film's logo on the left temple.

The CDM Company set included designs based on R2-D2, Poe Dameron, the First Order executioner trooper, and Snoke's Praetorian Guard. The R2-D2 pair, which were rather enormous compared to most *Star Wars* 3D glasses, were also offered via the Loot Crate DX subscription service in Dec. 2017.

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2010 that an MCU film was released in the U.S. without Blu-ray 3D as an option.

<sup>45</sup> Users of DMA were sent an email about migrating their collections from DMA to MA on Oct. 13, 2017. The old DMA site officially closed as of Mar. 1, 2018.



TLJ RealD 3D glasses (2017) – CDM Company set  
Top row: R2-D2 (left) and executioner trooper (right)  
Bottom row: Poe Dameron (left) and Praetorian Guard (right)



R2-D2 design (left temple)



Poe Dameron design (left temple)



Executioner trooper design (left temple)



Praetorian Guard design (left temple)

Meanwhile, Look3D released two of their own pairs, this time harkening back to a concept from the CDM Company set for TFA two years earlier with a pair based on Captain Phasma, alongside an executioner trooper pair, similar to the TLJ CDM Company line.



TLJ RealD 3D glasses (2017) – Look3D set  
Captain Phasma (left) and executioner trooper (right)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Packaging variation (which is somewhat hard to see) in the picture is due to the Captain Phasma pair being American, while the executioner trooper pair is bilingual





Executioner trooper design (left temple)



Captain Phasma design (left temple)

Unfortunately, as we will again see with a few forms of international home video releases shortly, *The Last Jedi* marked the end of a product line. To date, it was the last *Star Wars* theatrical release to receive special RealD 3D glasses, both via CDM Company and Look3D distribution.

Before we leave the concept, though, there is one more pair that I'd like to showcase here, the release date of which has thus far eluded me. At some point during the production of 3D *Star Wars* films, Look3D produced a special, high quality pair of RealD 3D glasses for use at internal Lucasfilm screenings.

The glasses themselves were much higher quality than found in theaters, made of sturdier material, including lenses that were not just flimsy plastic. (The left lens bore a sticker that noted that the glasses were RealD certified that could be removed prior to use.) Instead of the typical practice of having a film logo on one temple and the RealD 3D logo on the other, both temples included the Lucasfilm logo.

Rather than a plastic wrap with various warnings and legalese, these

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Canadian (English and French).

included a small card with that information that folded into a small tag with the Lucasfilm logo on one side (and Look 3D info on the other) that was attached (before use) to the glasses via the left temple. Another card noted the certification of the glasses for use with Real3D passive 3D systems.

The glasses came with a lens cleaning cloth that was gray with a Lucasfilm logo at the bottom. The glasses, cloth, and certification notice card were all held within a nice, black glasses case that also bore the Lucasfilm logo. The case was then placed inside a thick, topless, black, cardboard container, which was then placed within a black slipcover that included the Lucasfilm logo in a gray rectangle.<sup>47</sup> Even without the elaborate collection of other items to accompany them, this pair of RealD 3D glasses were by far the fanciest we've seen in this guide.



Lucasfilm RealD 3D glasses (date unknown) by Look3D

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<sup>47</sup> Yes, that's a *lot* of Lucasfilm logos! I count six: one each on the container, glasses case, cloth, and legalese tag, then two on the glasses themselves. They definitely wanted to leave no doubt as to where these fancy glasses were acquired.



Right temple

This lovely, relatively rare item provides a fitting end to our look at *Star Wars* RealD 3D glasses. One can only hope that we will see the concept revisited someday, though with 3D options in theaters starting to dwindle, that seems perhaps a faint hope at best.

### **“But in 4K, I’m *stunning!*”<sup>48</sup> (2018)**

The single most divisive *Star Wars* film of the Disney era, *The Last Jedi*, continued the *Skywalker Saga* (as the numbered films were beginning to be called) in theaters on Dec. 15, 2017. By that time, the releases of *Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 2* and *Thor: Ragnarok* on Ultra HD Blu-ray had seemed to make a 4K release of TLJ a *fait accompli*. Surely Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment would start releasing this flagship property in 4K.

Thankfully, unlike in previous eras in which *Star Wars* releases significantly lagged behind in being introduced on newer formats, TLJ did indeed bring *Star Wars* to Ultra HD Blu-ray just two years after the format made its commercial debut in Feb. 2016. As with the prior two films, TLJ saw digital release first, premiering on multiple platforms on Mar. 13, 2018. Just as the gap between digital and physical releases had widened from 4 days for TFA to 11 days for *Rogue One*, the gap again increased. *Episode VIII* received its plethora of physical releases in the U.S. on Mar. 27, a full two weeks after its digital launch.<sup>49</sup>

### **For a More Digital Age (2018)**

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<sup>48</sup> Long live Londo Mollari, even if it’s the wrong “wars among the stars” franchise.

<sup>49</sup> The time from theatrical release to home video this time was 88 days for digital and 102 days for physical media. This tied *The Clone Wars*, if digital release was our basis for comparison.



*The Last Jedi* was available through various digital platforms. A particularly interesting treat for fans of John Williams' *Star Wars* music was made exclusive to the digital release of the film at this time: a score-only version of the film. (This viewing option would later be included on physical Blu-ray copies of the film when TLJ was released again with updated discs for the *Skywalker Saga* boxed set in 2020.<sup>50</sup>)

Movies Anywhere also included an extra featurette (in the "Discover" section of the film's listing), entitled *Rebel Rose*.

Microsoft offered a bonus featurette for preordering, but it was again just reused content, a featurette they called *The New Face of the Resistance* that had already been released as *The New Head of the Resistance* via YouTube on Dec. 1, 2017. This same featurette, without a title listed (just "featurette") was also offered with preorders through Vudu.

On Amazon Video, customers could view the film with an "X-ray" subtitle track that provided interesting trivia about the film.

The PlayStation Store (still not connected to Movies Anywhere for synchronization) offered a PlayStation 4 theme, based on Crait, and a set of seven avatars with TLJ preorders. Avatars included Luke, Leia, Kylo Ren, Finn, Rey, Poe, and BB-8, all based on the same red and gray color artwork, known at times as the "blood red cloak" character poster set, which we will see on the swappable Walmart cover art in a moment (or, in BB-8's case, similar art). Only the character's head was visible, since these were meant to be avatars for players' profiles.

As fans had hoped, TLJ received the first Ultra HD Blu-ray release of any *Star Wars* film, joining the ranks of ANH in the VHS (et al) era, TPM in the DVD era, *The Clone Wars* in the Blu-ray era, and TFA on Blu-ray 3D as the first of its kind for the saga.

The most basic release for TLJ was again a DVD-only product. Like TFA and *Rogue One*, it included a DVD copy of the film and a code slip for Disney Movie Reward points (but not a digital copy) within a standard DVD case without a slipcover. Cover art, taken from the version B poster in regions like Japan (which was different from the American version B poster that we will see used in other regions), featured the major characters in a fan-like formation above the film's logo, with Rey angled toward the case's right edge at the top center, Luke and Kylo Ren below her to either

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<sup>50</sup> Don't get me started! (See the chapter *All Together Now* for the issues surrounding that updated TLJ disc and where it was – and wasn't – available.)

side, angled away from Rey, and Leia in the center just below Luke and Kylo, looking toward the viewer. Other characters spread from both sides of Leia, while First Order walkers on Crait were situated below the title. The disc label featured the same First Order walker image from below the title on the case artwork but continued downward from there to show ski speeders charging the First Order in the foreground. The Disney Movie Rewards points slips featured an image of BB-8, continuing the trend from TFA and RO of each film's code slip having its own artwork, while we will see that code slips that also provided a digital copy instead changed to a uniform style beginning with the TLJ product line.



TLJ (DVD, 2018)

The standard Blu-ray release for TLJ marked a turning point in *Star Wars* home media. This release included a Blu-ray copy of the film, a Blu-ray bonus features disc, and a code for a digital copy of the film and Disney Movie Rewards points. It did not, however, include a DVD copy of the film. Similar to other contemporary Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment releases that included a Blu-ray copy of the film (and sometimes a Blu-ray bonus features disc) with a digital copy/points code,

this release was dubbed the *Multi-screen Edition*<sup>51</sup> on its packaging and featured a similar cover style to other such releases. Unlike the DVD release, this one did include a slipcover (with the same artwork as its standard, blue Blu-ray case), which featured the same artwork as the DVD-only release.

Since we will see plenty of these *Multi-screen Editions* in the releases to come, we should note what this unified packaging design included. Slipcovers featured a silver border with a thick upper region that noted formats in black text. A blue line ran directly below that upper, silver region. A red banner broke that blue line, directly beneath the format list, and labeled the item a *Multi-screen Edition* in white text. At the bottom, a rounded region began at the right edge and extended about three quarters of the width to the left before fully tapering off. This lower region included the phrase “Watch Anywhere,” the Movies Anywhere logo, and then labeled pictures of four means of viewing the film (computer, smartphone, TV, and tablet). Inside, the Blu-ray case's cover art was quite similar, but due to the shape of the case and the nature of a case art insert, it lacked any of the silver border except the oversized upper region. Of course, since it was in a standard Blu-ray case, a large “Blu-ray Disc” logo appeared on the case itself above the artwork.

The film Blu-ray disc's label showed Kylo Ren observing First Order forces prior to the vision in which rain carries over from Rey's side of the connection. The Blu-ray bonus features disc label featured Rian Johnson speaking with Anthony Daniels (in C-3PO costume). Again, the bonus features disc label was in color, which will matter later.

The code slip, which was redeemable for the film, bonus features, and Disney Movie Rewards points, was now of a standardized, inaugural style for Movies Anywhere. The background of this new style gradually shifted from blue to purple as one moved from left to right across the slip. A top area included the phrase “Introducing Movies Anywhere” (with “Movies Anywhere” as its logo). Directly below that region was a wide area of film-specific artwork, which in this case was essentially the characters from the cover art spread out a bit more with the film's logo to their left. Beneath that, another blue-to-purple region stated, “Your digital movie is waiting for you,” followed by a region for the individual digital code, then instructions

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<sup>51</sup> The “multi-screen” aspect referred to the digital copy being playable on various platforms via mobile devices, computers, televisions, etc. It was not a reference to the physical copies that were included, hence other regions that lacked included digital copies not receiving the *Multi-screen Edition* branding.



on how to redeem the code (and a reminder that codes were not to be sold or transferred to others). A smaller, gray/silver area at the bottom provided information about redeeming the code for Disney Movie Rewards points. This code slip design was used for all of TLJ's releases, except the DVD-only item, with the code unlocking either just the HD film and bonus features or also the 4K version of the film, depending on the product in which that particular code was packaged.



TLJ (Blu-ray, Digital, 2018)

The most elaborate of the standard releases was the so-called *Ultimate Collector's Edition* (another name used by Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment for releases in a particular style, not anything actually “ultimate” or a “collector’s edition” at all). It included the film on Ultra HD Blu-ray, the film on Blu-ray, the Blu-ray bonus features disc, and a code for a digital copy and Disney Movie Rewards points, all in a standard, black Ultra HD Blu-ray case with an embossed slipcover. The days of multiple physical formats in a single package were not over yet. They had simply shifted “upward” in definition from Blu-ray and DVD (i.e. HD and SD) combo packs to the pairing of Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray (i.e. UHD and HD).

Again, it is worthwhile to note here what the new, standardized *Ultimate Collector's Edition* packaging scheme entailed. Slipcovers included a black region at the top with the “4K Ultra HD” logo. The region below featured

a gold border on top and both sides, but not the bottom. The top of the gold border listed the release's formats in black text. The bottom part of the cover art's "frame" was instead red and stated "Ultimate Collector's Edition" in white text.<sup>52</sup> Inside the gold/red frame was the cover art, which was covered a bit in the bottom right corner by the same Movies Anywhere information that could be found on the *Multi-screen Edition*. Since the slipcover included the "4K Ultra HD" logo at the top, the case underneath was essentially identical, with the exception of not having the right or left sides of the gold border.

The Ultra HD Blu-ray label featured Rey igniting her (or Luke's) lightsaber while training on Ahch-To, above a standard, black area that held the "4K Ultra HD" logo and other information.



TLJ (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018)

As tended to be the case for most Ultra HD Blu-rays, no bonus features were included on the UHD film disc. However, it should be noted that one "bonus" of this Ultra HD Blu-ray of TLJ, compared to discs authored later (e.g. in 2020's *Skywalker Saga* boxed set), was that this 2018 UHD release of

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<sup>52</sup> While packaging was mostly standardized, I should note that there were exceptions to the terminology. For example, while *Frozen II* shared the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* moniker, Disney's 4K releases of the Marvel films were labeled as *Cinematic Universe Editions*.

TLJ included Dolby Vision HDR on the disc itself. This was the only *Star Wars* Ultra HD Blu-ray release to include Dolby Vision on-disc, rather than sticking with HDR10 and leaving Dolby Vision as an option only for digital viewing.

This 4K disc also introduced another Dolby feature that would continue forward to future Ultra HD Blu-ray releases (unlike Dolby Vision): Dolby Atmos audio. This added four overhead speakers to a standard 7.1 audio option, allowing even more immersive sound... for those who could afford a home theater with Dolby Atmos capabilities (including four extra physical speakers, positioned at four corners of a rectangle with the viewer inside, mounted on or near the ceiling). Thus far, 7.1.4 has been the height of *Star Wars* home video audio options. We've gone from releases with audio meant for 2 speakers (but capable of using just 1 if needed) in front of the viewer to new releases that can make use of 12 different speakers (7 regular or surround, 1 subwoofer, and 4 overhead), arranged around the viewer.

The Blu-ray film disc included an audio commentary with director Rian Johnson, recorded before the film's theatrical release. The Blu-ray bonus features disc included a wealth of extras, including the feature-length documentary *The Director and the Jedi*, 14 deleted scenes (which included an introduction by Johnson and optional commentary when viewing each scene), and five other featurettes: *Andy Serkis Live! (One Night Only)*; *Balance of the Force*, and three *Scene Breakdowns* (*Lighting the Spark: Creating the Space Battle*, *Snoke and Mirrors*, and *Showdown on Crait*).

Once again, multiple retailer exclusives were available. Best Buy continued its trend of providing exclusive SteelBook versions of the films, but the company seemed caught between media eras. Instead of offering a single SteelBook release, Best Buy offered two. Both physical SteelBooks were identical, and each included a Blu-ray copy of the film, the Blu-ray bonus features disc, and a digital copy and Disney Movie Rewards code. However, one of the SteelBooks also included a DVD copy, while the other included the film on Ultra HD Blu-ray instead. The Blu-ray/DVD version was significantly more difficult to find in stores, even on release day, suggesting that fans weren't necessarily ready for the transition to 4K and opted for the more familiar formats instead. Indeed, the Best Buy SteelBook that included the Ultra HD Blu-ray copy of the film was the only store exclusive to include a 4K copy for TLJ. Moreover, this SteelBook was a WEA (World Exclusive Artwork) SteelBook, which shared its art with other non-SteelBooks in other regions but no other actual SteelBooks. This art included the heroes of the Resistance on the front (from the version D or "light" poster art) and villains of the First Order on the back (from the version C or "dark" poster art) with ski speeders featured inside.



A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



TLJ (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2018) – Best Buy exclusive



TLJ (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018) – Best Buy exclusive



Best Buy exclusive SteelBook (exterior)



Interior

Walmart broke the pattern of their initial TFA and *Rogue One* exclusives when it came time for TLJ. The Walmart exclusive included the film and bonus feature Blu-ray discs, a DVD copy of the film, and a code for a digital copy and Disney Movie Rewards points. (No *Star Wars Galactic Connexions* game discs or trading cards were included this time.) An unusual slipcover fit over a standard Blu-ray case with art that was very similar to the standard *Multi-screen Edition*, albeit with the extra DVD format noted. The slipcover itself was rather interesting, though, in that it was outwardly similar to Target's exclusive packaging for *Rogue One*. The dark red slipcover featured a clear front section (adorned only with the film's logo) that allowed six different art cards (one more than Target's *Rogue One* variant) to show through, letting the owner customize the package's cover. The six art options included "blood red cloak" character poster images of Rey, Finn, Poe, Kylo Ren, Luke, and Leia.



## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



TLJ (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2018) – Walmart exclusive



Interchangeable Walmart cover art cards





All six possible Walmart exclusive version appearances

Target, which had lacked any sort of pattern to their TFA and RO releases, again changed their approach. This time, however, the packaging (though not the formats included) would be the start of a pattern that would hold all the way through *The Rise of Skywalker*. Target's *The Last Jedi* exclusive included the film on Blu-ray and DVD, the bonus features Blu-ray, and the expected digital copy/points code. Target's exclusive once again included an extra featurette (*Meet the Porgs*), which came on a separate DVD, similar to how *Rogue One*'s Target bonus content was presented. Also included within the Target exclusive's packaging was a "gallery book," a small book featuring artwork, photos, and details about the film. The cover of the gallery book featured Rey with her lightsaber while training on Ahch-To and came from a series of character posters that appear to have been used to promote the film in China.

Slipcover art featured the main characters against a white background, split by a red region in the center. Rey, cloaked in red, was turned toward the viewer, looking at the viewer (rather than down, which will matter later). This was essentially the IMAX poster artwork for the film, yet subtly altered to change Rey's pose. The exclusive DVD's label was a rather lackluster white, artless affair with only the relevant logos adorning it. The inner case featured artwork of Leia, Poe, and Finn on the interior (when folded out entirely) and Luke, Kylo Ren, and Rey on the back, all from a what appears to have been a South Korean, theatrical poster series.

## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



TLJ (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2018) – Target exclusive



Disc labels – Note the Target exclusive DVD (bottom right).



Target exclusive inner case (interior)



Target exclusive inner case (exterior)

Disney Store and shopDisney again offered a set of four 14 in. x 10 in. lithographs for those who preordered copies of TLJ, while not offering



their own exclusive version of the home video release. Images included: Chewbacca and a porg on the *Millennium Falcon*; Rey near the Dark Side pit on Ahch-To; Finn vs. Captain Phasma aboard the *Supremacy*; and Kylo Ren in his helmet.



Lithograph folder



2018 Disney Store lithograph seal



TLJ Disney Store and shopDisney preorder lithographs

Disney Movie Club continued its approach of providing a single, smaller (6.75 in. x 5 in.) lithograph to those ordering *The Last Jedi*. This time, Rey was featured with her staff while training on Ahch-To. More importantly, for the first time, Disney Movie Club also introduced their own exclusive release for a *Star Wars* film. Typically, DMC copies of films had been



standard retail releases. Only the bonus mini-lithograph had drawn any distinction between DMC and retail purchases of *Rogue One*, while there had been no distinction whatsoever for *The Force Awakens*. For TLJ, DMC offered its own *Multi-screen Edition*, designed almost exactly like the standard Blu-ray (film and bonus discs) and digital code version released far and wide. However, the DMC release was an exclusive that, like with the other retailer exclusives focused on Blu-ray, actually included a DVD copy. (In that sense, its interior case art was like that of the Walmart exclusive, but the DMC variant's slipcover was essentially just the *Multi-screen Edition* slipcover with DVD format information added, similar to the interior case. The slipcover, unlike everything inside it, was unique to DMC.) This was an oft-missed exclusive, given that it received little attention at the time from media websites hyping up the more varied exclusives of brick and mortar stores.



TLJ (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2018) – Disney Movie Club exclusive



Disney Movie Club mini-lithograph

Unfortunately for fans of Blu-ray 3D, none of the American releases included a 3D copy of the film.<sup>53</sup> Fans of the format were not entirely without hope, however, as the format lived on in other regions. *Star Wars* Blu-ray 3D releases typically still saw release on region-free discs in the UK and Region A (which included the U.S.) discs in Japan, allowing them to be played in U.S. players, even if the discs themselves did not originate in the United States. This enabled fans to import copies with relative ease.

Before leaving TLJ's physical launch, one should also make note of a series of other "alternate covers" that were not actual home video releases. On the same day as the TLJ physical release, the official *Star Wars* website provided fans with image files for four different alternate cover inserts that could be printed and placed inside a standard Blu-ray case. Two featured action figure recreations of the battle in Snoke's throne room, while the others featured an action figure shot of Rey on Ahch-To and a LEGO image of Luke, Rey, and porgs at night on Ahch-To near the *Millennium Falcon*. These were only inserts for Blu-ray cases without any kind of slipcovers to also create, but Lucasfilm would correct that "oversight" with the next film's release.

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<sup>53</sup> To be clear here, *Star Wars* films *were* still released in theaters in 3D in America. They just didn't receive home video releases on Blu-ray 3D after *Rogue One*.



Downloadable case inserts

### Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2018)

The UK saw its TLJ home video launch on Apr. 9, 2018, just shy of two weeks after the U.S. release.

Once again, the most basic version of TLJ on home video in the United Kingdom was a DVD-only version, which was nearly identical to its American counterpart, aside from being Region 2 PAL.



TLJ (UK DVD, 2018)



Like TFA, the standard Blu-ray release, which included the Blu-ray film and bonus features discs, came in a standard Blu-ray case with similar international version B art to the American release, covered with either of two limited edition slipcovers, representing the Resistance and First Order. The artwork on the two slipcovers were essentially the art from each side of the American Best Buy SteelBook (i.e. the version D and C poster art, respectively). Since these versions did not include a digital copy, the UK releases were able to avoid the rather garish *Multi-screen Edition* branding of the U.S. release.



TLJ (UK Blu-ray, 2018) –  
Resistance slipcover



TLJ (UK Blu-ray, 2018) –  
First Order slipcover

Like in the U.S., TLJ marked the first *Star Wars* film to arrive on home video in the UK on Ultra HD Blu-ray. The standard release included the film on Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray, plus the Blu-ray bonus features disc. Like the Blu-ray releases, the lack of a digital copy allowed this version to avoid the heavy branding – this time as an *Ultimate Collector's Edition* – found on the American release. In the U.S., the standard 4K release had cover art on both slipcover and case that was essentially identical (minus branding) to the standard Blu-ray release's artwork. For the UK, the standard 4K/HD package featured artwork on both case and slipcover that resembled the Target exclusive cover art in the U.S. However, the tone of this cover was a little more somber, given that instead of looking at the viewer as at Target, Rey was facing downward, as in the original IMAX poster version of the artwork.



TLJ (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2018)

For American collectors, the single most important aspect of TLJ's UK premiere was that it carried on a format that Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment had abandoned on the U.S. market. TLJ received a release in the UK that included the film's standard Blu-rays (film and bonus features discs), plus the film on Blu-ray 3D! As with *Rogue One*, this was not a retailer exclusive but widely available and recognizable by a slipcover with a thick red border denoting it as a Blu-ray 3D release. This time, the film's logo also included "3D" underneath. Both the slipcover and inner case used the same artwork as the Ultra HD Blu-ray/standard Blu-ray package. Since it did not exist on the American market, one should also note that the Blu-ray 3D label featured Rey with her staff during training on Ahch-To (taken from the same shot as that used for the Disney Movie Club mini-lithograph).



TLJ (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)

In the U.S., Best Buy had been caught between media generations, choosing to provide two different SteelBooks: one for Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray and another for Blu-ray and DVD. In the UK, Zavvi also released two different versions of their exclusive SteelBook for TLJ, using the same SteelBook for both but slightly different content. The first included the film on Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray, plus the Blu-ray bonus features disc. The second swapped out the Ultra HD Blu-ray for a copy of the film on Blu-ray 3D. Both came in a very different SteelBook than the American, Best Buy exclusive, WEA version. The UK SteelBook featured the standard WWA look that could be found in most regions. The cover featured Rey with her lightsaber and the droids in the bottom right corner, while the back featured Kylo Ren with his lightsaber and Phasma on the bottom left. (These were all elements from the American version B poster art, separated out to create this “new” art.) For the UK, a region where English was the dominant language, the SteelBook bore the film’s English logo, whereas other, non-English regions would drop the logo. (The interior was identical to the U.S. SteelBook.)





TLJ (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) –  
Zavvi exclusive



TLJ (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray,  
Blu-ray, 2018) – Zavvi exclusive

Due to standard “4K Ultra HD” branding at the top of most home video releases, the J-card for the 4K SteelBook included a top portion that folded over from the back to cover the upper edge of the front, while the 3D version did not, making the SteelBooks fairly easy to distinguish at a glance when still sealed in shrink wrap. (The placement of icons on the bottom corners of the J-cards also varied, though they weren’t as easy to spot from a distance as the 4K branding.)



Zavvi exclusive UK TLJ SteelBooks with J-cards – 4K (left) and 3D (right)



TLJ Zavvi exclusive SteelBook (exterior)

For the last time (thus far), the UK also offered a *Big Sleeve Edition*. Like the BSE for RO, this was available through Tesco, only this time through Tesco Direct (the chain's online store, which folded four months later) rather than Tesco Extra. The package included the same discs as the standard Ultra HD Blu-ray release. These were housed within a large jacket with Rey on Ahch-To facing away from the viewer on the front, partially overlapping with a Resistance starbird symbol. The back was a similar image of Kylo Ren in a corridor, overlapping with a First Order symbol. The inside featured a wide version of the American version B poster artwork, in which a hooded Luke loomed over everyone. Four 12 in. square art cards were included, each of which had artwork on both sides instead of a generic back as was the case for TFA and RO. Thus, the art cards provided eight distinct images. Those included: BB-8; BB-9E; Rey's (or Anakin's or Luke's) lightsaber; Kylo Ren's lightsaber; an X-wing; a First Order Special Forces TIE fighter; Poe's flight helmet; and a First Order crew helmet.





TLJ *Big Sleeve Edition* (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2018) – with J-card



Disc labels



Art prints



Interior





Exterior

Once again, Sainsbury's, while not offering a variant home video product, gave away copies of the film's junior novelization by Michael Kogge with purchase of any version of the film. Whereas the American junior novelization used the international version B poster art found in places like Japan, the UK cover used the American version B poster art.



TLJ junior novelization comparison – U.S. paperback (left) vs. UK paperback provided free with purchase of the film at Sainsbury's (right)

I would note also that, while none of the UK physical releases included the *Meet the Porgs* featurette, it was available for viewing in the UK via the Virgin Media television platform.

### Meanwhile in Japan (2018)

If the elaborate MovieNEX boxed sets for *The Force Awakens* and *Rogue*

One had been merely “impressive,” *The Last Jedi*’s similarly-named (or similarly-translated) MovieNEX *Premium Box Set (Limited Edition)*, released on Apr. 25, 2018, raised the content of such a release to “most impressive” status.

Rather than a glossy (and highly reflective) starfield background with the film’s logo, the TLJ *Premium Box Set* instead broke with recent tradition by featuring a plain, white (matte, rather than glossy) box with the film’s logo in the center. The box also did not come together fully, allowing a strip of the red interior to show through as a ring around the closed box. This new box style was also quite a bit larger (13.5 in. x 11.5 in. x 3.38 in.) than its predecessors (just 13 in. x 9 in. x 2.38 in.). Removing the lid revealed a first layer of content, held in a red cardboard insert that was, unfortunately, somewhat prone to tearing with relatively little pressure. It held two small boxes of physical bonus items and two home video cases.



TLJ *Premium Box Set (Limited Edition)*  
(Japanese Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray  
3D, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018)



Side view – Notice that the cover/top  
and bottom (not removable) were  
larger than the central, red section.

The use of two home video cases was an odd approach. The first was a black Ultra HD Blu-ray case with artwork featuring hooded Luke above the other characters. (Yes, the standard American releases borrowed the version B artwork used for posters in places like Japan, while this Japanese case art borrowed from the American version B poster. There’s symmetry in that, I suppose.) This case was then covered by a slipcover with artwork similar to the American Target exclusive release (i.e. the IMAX poster with Rey altered to look toward the viewer). This case, marked only as “4K UHD MovieNEX” instead of by all the formats it contained, held three film discs: Ultra HD Blu-ray; Blu-ray 3D; and standard Blu-ray. Those discs were accompanied by a MovieNEX digital copy code slip (featuring BB-8) and an advertising booklet, which included ads for, among other offerings, *Solo*, which would premiere in Japan about two months later on June 29, 2018.





Top layer of content (all content except art cards and frame)

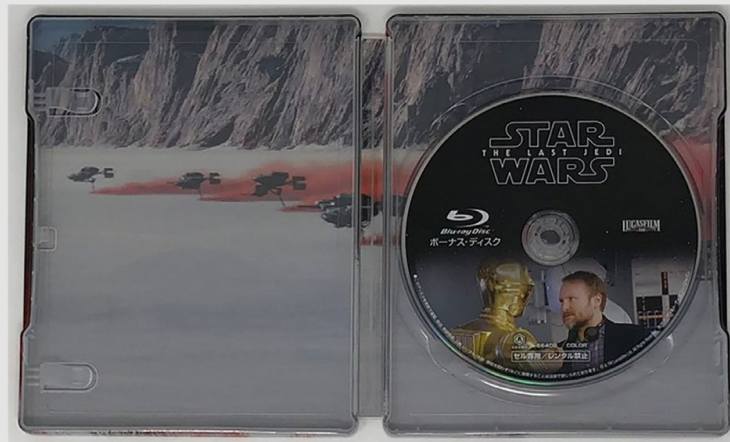


Cases and content – Note the inclusion of both a standard Ultra HD Blu-ray case with slipcover *and* a SteelBook, rather than simply one or the other.

To find the film's Blu-ray bonus features disc, one needed to check inside the second home video case in this set, a SteelBook with the international (WWA) cover art, no logo on the cover, and English on the



spine, which made it an oddball among the other *Sequel Trilogy* and both anthology films, which were language independent with character images on their spines. This odd SteelBook opened to reveal the bonus features Blu-ray, placed inside the only disc space in the entire SteelBook interior.



SteelBook interior, designed to fit only a single disc



Exclusive S.H. Figuarts BB-8 (with removable “lighter arm”)

Like its predecessors, this package included an action figure. Similar to

*Rogue One*, this figure was an exclusive from S.H. Figuarts: BB-8 with a removable “lighter arm.”<sup>54</sup> Given its smaller size, it was packaged in its own small box, which fit into the package’s top layer.

Next to BB-8 was another physical item in its own box. This was a Takara Tomy TLJ logo from the company’s Logo Collection. This was a red and black *Star Wars* logo that resembled a thick paperweight.



Takara Tomy TLJ Logo Collection bonus item

Lifting out most of the inner packaging revealed a plastic frame with seven 7.19 in. x 10.06 in. art cards inside, similar to those found in the TFA and RO *Premium Limited Box Editions*. These featured full-body character shots, used for a series of posters to promote the film in China, of Rey, Finn, Poe Dameron, Kylo Ren, Luke Skywalker, and Leia Organa, plus BB-8 in Poe’s X-wing.

It was a great item for those looking for a fancy presentation of TLJ, but it varied enough from its two predecessors to make it a bit of an anomaly on collectors’ shelves. With Region A content, this was a viable alternative for American viewers. Unfortunately, this would be the last of these excellent MovieNEX boxed sets for individual *Star Wars* films in Japan. *Solo* and *The Rise of Skywalker* would not receive such treatment.

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<sup>54</sup> The standard version of the figure had a “lighter arm” also, but it could not be removed.



### Meanwhile in Italy (2018)

Surprisingly, the Japanese SteelBook for TLJ featured the same English spine as that of the UK release. A language independent version with character portraits on the spine *did* exist, however. For example, the Italian version featured Italian text on its J-card but a language independent SteelBook with portraits instead of text on the spine. The images came from the Chinese character posters.





TLJ (Italian Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)



SteelBook spine comparison:  
U.S. (left); UK (center); and Italy (right)

Notice that all included the Lucasfilm logo at the top and the Blu-ray logo at the bottom. The U.S. design varied from other regions like the UK and Japan that used English text by being a different color (due to a very different SteelBook design overall). The Italian version illustrated the language independent version not found in Japan this time. It featured (from top to bottom): Luke Skywalker; Leia Organa; Kylo Ren; Rey; Finn; Poe Dameron; and BB-8.

### Meanwhile in South Korea (2018)

In South Korea, *The Last Jedi* reached home video on Apr. 27, 2018. This time, there were no retailer exclusives.

The most basic version was, of course, a DVD-only release. Again, the disc label for this Region 3 DVD was significantly different than in the U.S., this time featuring BB-8 in Poe Dameron's X-wing, rather than the more dull Battle of Crait artwork of most regions. The DVD case featured similar art to the standard U.S. releases (i.e. international version B poster art), but the slipcover used the image with “hooded Luke” at the top (i.e. the American version B poster art). Like RO, this release included an insert with character information in Korean, beneath their South Korean character poster artwork. Unlike RO (but like TFA), the disc label, cover, and slipcover all bore the Korean title instead of English, as did the insert, which was new.



TLJ (South Korean DVD, 2018)



Insert (interior)

A second release included only the Blu-ray film and bonus discs. It featured the same “altered IMAX poster” front cover as the American Target exclusive release with a torso shot of Kylo Ren holding his lightsaber on the back. The inner Blu-ray case was clear with art of Rey training on Ahch-To (from her Chinese character poster, like the cover of the Target exclusive version’s gallery book), and back art dominated by Kylo Ren vs. Luke Skywalker. Since this was a clear case, the interior featured art of Chewbacca and a porg in the *Millennium Falcon* cockpit. Disc label art was essentially the same as in the U.S.



TLJ (South Korean Blu-ray, 2018)



A third release included both Blu-ray discs, along with the film on Blu-ray 3D. Its slipcover featured the same art as the region's DVD slipcover (i.e. American version B poster art), albeit with the English title and a tiny Korean title beneath. The back artwork was the TLJ teaser poster with Rey centered at the bottom with her lightsaber blazing skyward, splitting the upper region into Luke on the left and Kylo on the right. (This and a poster with just the title against a starfield were both known as “version A,” but this version was known as the “second version” of version A.<sup>55</sup>) This time, the clear Blu-ray case inside had artwork very similar to the standard Blu-ray release from the U.S. (i.e. international version B poster art). The interior image, visible due to the clear case, was of Rey speaking to Luke from outside his hut. The Blu-ray 3D disc label mirrored the UK version.



TLJ (South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)

The final version was the South Korean SteelBook release. The SteelBook itself was similar to the SteelBook found in the UK (i.e. English logo, English spine, WWA). The discs included were the same as those of the standard Blu-ray 3D release. The SteelBook was packaged within a slipcover that mirrored the artwork of the American SteelBook from Best Buy (i.e. poster version D art on the front). This release also included a

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<sup>55</sup> Would it have killed them to have a different name? For that matter, what about different terminology for the two different “version B” posters we keep seeing?

gallery book (Korean language only) that featured Luke on the cover and Leia Organa on the back, both from the Chinese character poster series. (This was essentially the same gallery book as the American Target version, just translated into Korean and given a new cover.)



TLJ (South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) – SteelBook version

Perhaps most the interesting aspect of the South Korean releases of TLJ was what *wasn't* available. The South Korean market did not see a release of *The Last Jedi* on Ultra HD Blu-ray.

### Meanwhile in China (2018)

As with the previous two films, China was a bit late to the party, but when they arrived, they delivered a fantastic array of limited edition items. On Oct. 6, 2018, Blufans released three individual limited editions and a One Click boxed set that included all three, just as they had with *Rogue One* and their second wave of TFA content.

Unsurprisingly, the three individual releases were a Double Lenticular Edition, Single Lenticular Edition, and Full Slip Edition. The Single Lenticular and Full Slip Editions included the film on both Blu-ray and Blu-ray 3D. The only version that also included the Blu-ray bonus features disc was again the Double Lenticular Edition. Each version included an embossed, WEA SteelBook. The cover included the film's logo and spine text in English. Cover art was similar to the “hooded Luke over everyone” art of the standard 3D and DVD releases in South Korea, except this time with Rey and Luke's positions swapped and Rey facing forward instead of angled to the side. (This was known as the Chinese version B poster art, not



to be confused with the American or international versions.) The back featured the “second version A” teaser poster artwork (Rey raising her lightsaber to cut the sky in half with Luke and Kylo Ren on either side). Interior artwork was essentially the artwork of the U.S. SteelBook’s exterior but with sides reversed from how an opened Best Buy SteelBook looked (i.e. version D Resistance artwork on the left and version C First Order artwork on the right). Disc labels were similar to their South Korean counterparts, albeit with most information presented through Chinese characters with very little English. All were marked as BE (“Blufans Exclusive”) 47.

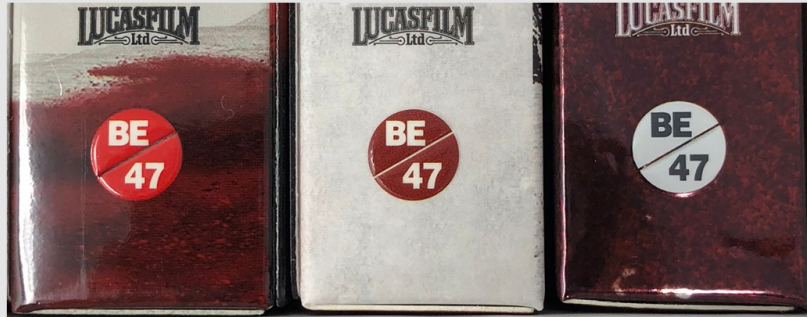


TLJ Blufans exclusive SteelBook (exterior)



Interior





Spine numbers (BE 47)



Disc labels

The Double Lenticular Edition's cover art was American version B poster artwork, while the back featured the same altered version of the IMAX poster artwork as the Target exclusive version in America. Both covers were lenticular. A gallery book was also included, featuring the film's logo on its cover and English text throughout. This time, the cardboard card that acted as this version's back cover when in shrink wrap was not a folder, nor did it hold a removable cutout with the copy's individual number. Instead, the individual number was on the side that faced outward when in shrink wrap (which for all of these releases just mirrored the art from the back of that version's slipcover), while the other side featured an image of Luke. All were individually numbered out of only 1,200 produced.



TLJ (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) –  
Blufans exclusive Double Lenticular Edition

The Single Lenticular Edition's lenticular cover featured shifting art of the “blood red cloak” character images of Rey, Luke, and Leia, which we previously saw among the American Walmart exclusive version's swappable cover images. The non-lenticular back side featured the Kylo Ren image from that same set of images. An envelope with the film's English logo included seven art cards (4.69 in. x 6.44 in.), each featuring a different character (Rey, Luke, Leia, Kylo Ren, Poe Dameron, Finn, and BB-8) with the film's logo, this time using art from the South Korean character posters. The cardboard “shrink wrap back” card featured Rey on its interior side, while the “back” noted its individual number from only 650 produced.



TLJ (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) –  
Blufans exclusive Single Lenticular Edition



Art cards

The Full Slip Edition featured artwork similar to that of the standard American releases (i.e. international poster version B) but within a red frame similar to the Walmart exclusive version. The back featured BB-8 (from the South Korean character poster series). Both sides were embossed. A mostly-white envelope contained seven more 4.69 in. x 6.44 in. art cards, featuring the same characters as the Single Lenticular Edition's cards, but



this time using the Chinese character poster art, similar to the art cards in the Japanese *Premium Boxed Set (Limited Edition)*. This version's cardboard “shrink wrap back” card featured Kylo holding his lightsaber ahead of him on the interior side, while the regular “back” provided its individual copy number out of 650 produced.



TLJ (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) –  
Blufans exclusive Full Slip Edition



Art cards



Back sides of Blufans slipcovers –  
Left to right: Full Slip; Double Lenticular; and Single Lenticular

As with TFA and RO, a One Click boxed set was available to acquire all three of these releases with matching individual copy numbers. The package was a mostly-white, glossy affair with the film's logo and a shot of ski speeders approaching the First Order forces during the Battle of Crait as its cover, similar to the American DVD label art. That image stretched toward both sides to also extend across the regular spine to the right and the other spine and magnetic flap to the left, (Both the regular spine and the spine portion of the flap also included Lucasfilm logos.) The back included red Resistance and First Order symbols with cast and crew information below. This package included an exclusive envelope that used the American version B poster art (except with Kylo Ren and Rey spread farther apart to allow Luke to be moved downward to accommodate a wide format). It housed four art cards (4.31 in. x 6.44 in.), each based on an AMC IMAX poster: ski speeders vs. AT-M6 walkers during the Battle of Crait; Kylo Ren bowing before Snoke in his throne room with members of the Elite Praetorian Guard flanking him; Finn vs. Captain Phasma in the deteriorating docking bay of the *Supremacy*; and Luke watching Rey training on Ahch-To. While the choice of artwork and glossy finish for the One Click box made this release seem a bit less fancy than that of *Rogue One*, it was still a bit more detailed than the mostly-starfield box for *The Force Awakens*.





TLJ One Click Set (Chinese Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) – Blufans exclusive



Interior



One Click Set art cards with folder

Unfortunately, this would be the last of the Blufans *Star Wars* releases as of the publication of this guide. Licensing issues have stood in the way of *Solo* and *The Rise of Skywalker* releases with no resolution in sight. Yes, this means that the UK's *Big Sleeve Editions*, the Japanese premium box products, and the Blufans releases were all available for just TFA, RO, and TLJ. As collectors, we are all worse off for the end of those product lines.

### A New Han (2018)

The next *Star Wars* film to arrive in theaters did so a mere five months after *The Last Jedi*, breaking the trend of Disney era *Star Wars* films being released in December.<sup>56</sup> *Solo: A Star Wars Story* instead returned to the saga's

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<sup>56</sup> Another way to look at it would be that *Solo* premiered in theaters less than two full months after *The Last Jedi* hit home video.



Memorial Day weekend roots with its theatrical release in the U.S. on the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of ANH (and 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ROTJ): May 25, 2018.

The release of *Solo* so early in the year created a unique moment in *Star Wars* home video history. With the exception of the *Special Edition Trilogy* in 1997, fans had never seen more than one *Star Wars* theatrical film make its home video debut in the same calendar year.<sup>57</sup> *Solo* arrived on digital platforms on Sept. 14, 2018, then in physical form 11 days later (the same gap as *Rogue One*) on Sept. 25, just shy of six months after *The Last Jedi*'s physical release altered the status quo by bringing Ultra HD Blu-ray to the table and banishing Blu-ray 3D from the U.S. market.<sup>58</sup>

#### **For a More Digital Age (2018)**

*Solo* was available through various digital platforms.

On Movies Anywhere, the “Discover” section of the film’s listing provided several featurettes: *Creating the Escape from Corellia*; *Becoming Solo*; *Solo Cast Reveals Their Must-have Star Wars Movies*; and *Tour the Millennium Falcon with Donald Glover*.

Preordering via Microsoft’s platform provided a very short (about 90 sec.) featurette entitled *The Millennium Falcon: An Origin Story*, which was unusual in that it was not a reused, existing YouTube video this time.<sup>59</sup>

On Amazon Video, customers could view the film with an “X-ray” subtitle track that provided interesting trivia about the film.

The standard releases of *Solo* followed the same pattern as they had for

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<sup>57</sup> I would not count the *Enok* telemovies, since they were not theatrical films in the United States.

<sup>58</sup> *Solo*'s move from theatrical premiere to home video took 112 days for digital or 123 days for physical media. This was the longest gap for any of the Disney era films to date.

<sup>59</sup> This video may no longer be available. I purchased *Solo* in 4K via my Xbox One S at the time, so checking my account via the Windows 10 Microsoft Movies & TV app allows access to the film and its bonus features, but that video does not appear. (I can't check if it's still around on Xbox because, well, my Xbox One S spontaneously caught fire one night, apparently while doing an automatic update while “off.” No joke: “snap, crackle, pop,” and a flame the size of my thumb coming out of the back of the Xbox One S.)

TLJ. The most basic was a single-disc DVD release, which included a Disney Movie Rewards points slip (but no digital copy). No slipcover was included, just a standard DVD case. Case and code slip artwork showed the film's heroic (okay, mostly heroic, or just scoundrels if you like) characters walking toward the viewer with the *Millennium Falcon* behind them and a bright sun behind it. The disc label featured Han and Chewie to the left of the center hole with the *Millennium Falcon* behind them, partially obscured by the disc's center hole.



*Solo* (DVD, 2018)

The regular Blu-ray release was again a *Multi-screen Edition* that included the film on Blu-ray, a Blu-ray of bonus features, and a code that could be redeemed for both a digital copy and Disney Movie Rewards points. This version included an embossed slipcover, as expected, and both inner case and slipcover featured the same art as the DVD-only version, simply with *Multi-screen Edition* branding.

The code slip was the next iteration in a standardized version for Movies Anywhere. The top region removed TLJ's "introducing" and just included the Movies Anywhere logo. A wide band of artwork from the cover was included again but with the logo to the right side instead of the left. The wording between the film-specific art and the code itself was reworded to simply say, "Redeem your digital movie code," followed by a reminder that this was part of a package purchase, not a code to be sold separately. Beneath the code area and instructions for redemption, which were essentially the same as that of TLJ, the previous film's now-redundant notation that the code was not for resale was replaced with a note that terms of use applied to the code's redemption. The bottom region with information about Disney Movie Rewards remained the same for now. This slip was identical for the *Multi-screen Edition*, *Ultimate Collector's Edition*, and exclusives through Best Buy and Disney Movie Club. Whether the copies unlocked by redemption were in Ultra HD or merely full HD depended on the origin of a code slip, not its design.

The Blu-ray film disc lacked any commentary this time, possibly owing to the film's turbulent production and change of directors. Instead, the bonus features Blu-ray included a roundtable discussion with the (final) director, Ron Howard, and the cast. While it was nice to see the people speaking instead of just hearing them, the roundtable<sup>60</sup> was only about 22 minutes in length, a far cry from a replacement for a full-length commentary. The bonus disc also included eight deleted or extended scenes and eight featurettes: *Kasdan on Kasdan*; *Becoming a Droid: L3-37*; *Into the Maelstrom: The Kessel Run*; *Remaking the Millennium Falcon*; *Team Chewie*; *Scoundrels, Droids, and Creatures: Welcome to Fort Ypso*; *The Train Heist*; and *Escape from Corellia* (not to be confused with Movies Anywhere's far shorter *Creating the Escape from Corellia*).



*Solo* (Blu-ray, Digital, 2018)

The Blu-ray film disc's label was similar to the case art, zoomed in a bit to show from Qi'ra rightward, with Chewbacca and Lando slightly separated to make room for the center hole. The bonus features disc label was a reddish-orange image of the Kessel Run crew in front of a white outline that resembled the *Millennium Falcon* cockpit. (This was essentially

<sup>60</sup> The roundtable discussion resembled the format of the *Disney Gallery: The Mandalorian* series released on Disney+ in 2020. See the chapter *Empire of Streams* in *Volume III*.



part of the “gun-toting” theatrical poster, but Han’s blaster and the arm holding it were removed to make the image palatable in various regions.)

The regular Ultra HD Blu-ray release, still ridiculously named the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* like with TLJ, included the film on Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray, the Blu-ray bonus features disc, and the digital copy/points code, within a standard, black Ultra HD-Blu-ray case with a matching, embossed slipcover. The Ultra HD Blu-ray disc label featured only the *Millennium Falcon* and film’s logo, above a standard, black “4K Ultra HD” region that resembled what was seen earlier in the year on the TLJ 4K disc.



*Solo* (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018)

The retailer exclusives for this release were a bit more subdued than those for *The Last Jedi*, and one was absolutely laughable.

Best Buy’s exclusive included the same discs as the standard *Ultimate Collector's Edition* release, packed into a SteelBook that featured the *Millennium Falcon* in flight on the front and members of the Kessel Run era crew on the back. The interior showed a view out of the *Millennium Falcon*’s unoccupied cockpit. The SteelBook lacked a title on the cover (but did have one on the spine) and was entirely smooth, the latter point being a deviation from many other worldwide *Solo* SteelBooks. (See sidebars.)



*Solo* (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018) – Best Buy exclusive



Best Buy exclusive SteelBook (exterior) –  
Notice that it was glossy, and the front was entirely flat.





Interior

Target's *Solo* exclusive also included the same three discs in packaging similar to the Target exclusive of *The Last Jedi*, bearing a nice gallery book in a sleeve within folding packaging with a slipcover. The outer slipcover featured the film's purple-hued, version C poster artwork. The interior package folded out to show Chinese character poster art of Han, Lando, and Qi'ra on the interior. The exterior showed the Chinese character poster art for Chewbacca and Tobias Beckett, alongside the Asian version A poster artwork of the crew in the cockpit from regions like China and South Korea. The gallery book's cover featured Han observing the sabacc table at the Lodge.

Target again included an exclusive bonus feature (*The Falcon: Through the Millennium*), but rather than presenting it on DVD as in the case of *Rogue One* and TLJ, this exclusive bonus featurette was digital-only, similar to the retailer's exclusive content for TFA. However, whereas a single digital code inside Target's TFA release had unlocked the film, its regular bonus features, and the exclusive bonus features all at once, the store's *Solo* release included two codes. One code unlocked the film and standard bonus features, while also providing Disney Movie Rewards points. The second code, found on the same code slip, unlocked the extra featurette.

Due to that differentiation in how the code slip was handled for Target, it is worth noting how its layout differed. The wide artwork from the case (and film title) that typically cut through the top half of a Movies Anywhere code slip was removed, allowing the entire blue-to-purple gradient area to be merged and all text usually below the film-specific art to be moved upward. The Disney Movie Rewards information at the bottom was also removed. This allowed all of the information from a normal code slip to be condensed into the top half of the Target code slip. The bottom half instead included two regions with yellow/orange backgrounds with clouds faintly visible, matching the cloud coloration of the standard cover art. The lighter of the two yellow/orange regions included a framed image of the



*Millennium Falcon* to the left and information about the Target exclusive featurette and how to redeem the code for it on the right. The darker orange region at the bottom included the box where that second code could be found.



*Solo* (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018) – Target exclusive



Inner packaging (exterior)



Inner packaging (interior)

Target also offered a special item that was only available to customers who were users of their store-specific credit card, known as the RedCard.<sup>61</sup> Fans who preordered using their RedCard via a special section of Target's website received an exclusive, red Metal Earth 3D model kit of "Lando's *Millennium Falcon*." This bonus item, which was essentially an all-red version of Metal Earth's Premium Series item of the same name, was the ship in its *Solo* configuration (i.e. with the escape pod and a sensor dish that pointed almost straight upward). Based on feedback from fellow collectors, I am inclined to believe that most of these remained unopened in their flat

<sup>61</sup> "Let's remove the space between the words. That will be brilliant marketing!"

packaging, as actually putting the model together was quite a chore (and often a painful one).

The model came on two flat sheets of thin metal, which required wire cutters to remove each piece. Pieces then needed to be bent and twisted very carefully to eventually merge the various elements (some of which were about the size of a single uppercase letter in this book) into the final Millennium Falcon model and its stand. This required at least wire cutters and ideally other specialized tools (a kit of which was available online specifically for this product line). Even with proper tools, stabbed fingers were a given. To be fair, the skill level of this particular model, according to the Metal Earth listing for its non-exclusive version, was “challenging.” All of these factors made this exclusive mostly either an unopened non-issue or an opened object of extreme frustration for fans for whom this was their first experience with Metal Earth models.



Target RedCard exclusive “Lando’s *Millennium Falcon*” Metal Earth 3D Model

The Disney Store and shopDisney again offered a set of four 14 in. x 10 in. lithographs for those preordering. This time, the folder featured the film’s heroes in similar art to the standard releases’ covers, except without the *Millennium Falcon* behind them. Images included: Han Solo, Lando Calrissian, Qi’ra, Chewbacca, and Tobias Beckett in the cockpit of the *Millennium Falcon*; Han and Chewbacca from behind with Chewie’s hand on Han’s shoulder; a blurry shot of the *Millennium Falcon* during the Akkadese Maelstrom TIE fighter chase; and Lando at the sabacc table at the Lodge at Fort Ypso.





Lithograph folder



2018 Disney Store lithograph seal



*Solo* Disney Store and shopDisney preorder lithographs

Disney Movie Club offered a 6.75 in. x 5 in. mini-lithograph, featuring Han and Chewie aboard the train on Vandor. Even more importantly, just as with TLJ, DMC offered their own exclusive version of the *Multi-screen Edition* that included the film on Blu-ray and DVD, plus the bonus features Blu-ray and digital code. However, while that had made it just an unusual variant of the *Multi-screen* edition for the previous film, amid various retailer exclusives that had also packaged DVD with Blu-ray, *Solo* had no such Blu-ray and DVD exclusives at physical stores. Thus, this DMC exclusive was the only way to acquire *Solo*'s DVD, both Blu-ray discs, and a digital code in the same package.



## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



*Solo* (Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2018) – Disney Movie Club exclusive



Disney Movie Club mini-lithograph

I should also note, before we leave Disney Movie Club's approach to *Solo* that some fans have erroneously claimed that a 4 in. x 4 in. sticker of Han and Chewie (from the DVD label) with the film's logo was a bonus item when ordering the film through DMC. That was *not* the case. The sticker in question was provided within one of the monthly mailers to everyone and had nothing to do with ordering the film (other than promoting it).



*Solo* Disney Movie Club sticker – This was provided to *everyone* in a mailer. It was *not* a bonus item from ordering the actual film in any format.

That, of course, leaves Walmart.

In the lead-up to the home video launch of *Solo*, hype and promotion was relatively light when compared to other recent *Star Wars* home video premieres. As the clock ticked down to Sept. 25, most retailer exclusives were either officially announced or had at least appeared on store websites for preorder... but not for Walmart. *Star Wars* home video collectors began to wonder if somehow Walmart had been left out of the *Solo* retailer exclusive product array. When Sept. 25 finally arrived, though, fans discovered that, yes, Walmart had an exclusive version of *Solo*. It just wasn't what fans had expected.

The Walmart exclusive of *Solo* featured the two standard Blu-ray discs (film and bonus features), similar to the *Multi-screen Edition*. It did not, however, include a digital copy. Instead, it included a code for Disney Movie Rewards points only, similar to the slip from the DVD-only release, just resized to fit a Blu-ray case. It was packaged in a standard Blu-ray case with an embossed slipcover that bore what amounted to the *Multi-screen Edition*'s artwork with all of the relevant *Multi-screen Edition* branding (i.e. the red box below the format notation at the top and the Movies Anywhere information at the bottom) stripped away. Yes, you read that correctly. Walmart's exclusive for *Solo* was basically a *substandard* release of the film, more basic than anything but the DVD-only version. This was a relatively new (and short-lived<sup>62</sup>) Walmart trend at the time: removing digital copies

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<sup>62</sup> The Marvel Cinematic Universe films provide some evidence of the short-lived nature of this asinine practice. *Black Panther* was affected by it when it arrived on home video on May 25, 2018. The practice then also affected *Avengers: Infinity War*



to offer a film at a *very* small discount over its standard *Multi-screen Edition* counterpart. It was true to form for several other contemporary Walmart exclusives, but for fans who expected retailer exclusives to actually *improve* upon the standard release, rather than subtract from it, this release felt like a bit of a slap in the face from “Wally World.”<sup>63</sup>



*Solo* (Blu-ray, 2018) – Walmart exclusive

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on Aug. 14 and *Ant-Man and the Wasp* on Oct. 16. However, it had not affected TLJ and *Thor: Ragnarok* in March, nor would it impact *Captain Marvel* (the next MCU film after *Ant-Man and the Wasp*) in June 2019.

<sup>63</sup> As a strange addendum to the story of this release, I actually ran across a huge shelf full of these “Blu-ray but no digital code” Walmart exclusive copies of *Solo* a few months later... at a local Best Buy. To this day, I have no idea whether they simply were a timed exclusive to Walmart that eventually went into wide release (only to never appear on *any* other local shelves in my area, which suggests that was *not* the case) or if somehow that local Best Buy received a bunch of incorrect exclusives of *Solo* and sat on them for months before pushing them out onto their shelves. Either way, these substandard copies of *Solo* deserve to be the home video equivalent of what action figure collectors call “peg-warmers,” a product that never leaves shelves because few find them worthy of purchase compared to the alternatives.





Slipcover comparison: DMC exclusive (left); standard *Multi-screen Edition* (center); and Walmart exclusive (right)

Lastly, before leaving the subject of *Solo*'s initial releases, one should note that on the same day as the physical release, the official *Star Wars* website provided an alternate cover for *Solo*, as it had with *The Last Jedi*. This time, it was just one alternate cover, but that cover was designed to include both a Blu-ray case insert and a slipcover (to be printed on regular paper and cardstock, respectively). Art was provided by Phil Noto, known at the time for his work on the Marvel Comics *Chewbacca* mini-series and *Poe Dameron* ongoing comic book series (the latter of which had its final issue released the very next day)



Downloadable slipcover and case insert

### Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2018)

The *Solo* home video launch in the United Kingdom on Sept. 24, 2018, one day before the U.S. release, followed somewhat familiar patterns. The two most basic versions were a Region 2 PAL DVD-only copy and a copy

that included the region-free Blu-ray film and bonus features discs. Both were visually similar to their U.S. counterparts but lacked the “black stripe” DVD-only or *Multi-screen Edition* branding, respectively. (In the latter case, this was due to not including a digital copy.) Like *Rogue One*, there was only one standard Blu-ray release for *Solo*, rather than having pair of different slipcovers. However, unlike even *Rogue One*, the inner case and slipcover for the Blu-ray version bore the same artwork.

I should note, as it was a subtle distinction and often missed, that the disc labels for the UK all used black to fill in dead space around the yellow letters in the *Solo* logo, rather than being “clear” to show the background as in the U.S.



*Solo* (UK DVD, 2018)



*Solo* (UK Blu-ray, 2018)

In keeping with TLJ, *Solo* received two other standard retail releases. One included Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs, along with the Blu-ray bonus features disc, while the other swapped out the Ultra HD Blu-ray film disc for a Blu-ray 3D film disc. The Blu-ray 3D disc label featured art from the international version A film poster (from locations like Japan), which was similar to the case art (characters with the *Millennium Falcon* behind them) but with only Han and Chewbacca present. The lack of a digital copy in the 4K package once again saved the UK from the ridiculous *Ultimate Collector's Edition* branding used in the U.S.





*Solo* (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)



*Solo* (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2018)

Just like with TLJ, Zavvi provided a pair of exclusive SteelBook versions of *Solo*, one for the Blu-ray 3D package and another for the Ultra HD Blu-ray package (both of which, as noted above, included the two Blu-ray discs). Both SteelBooks were identical to each other and similar (but *not* identical) to the American version from Best Buy. Whereas the Best Buy version bore an Ultra HD Blu-ray logo at the bottom of its spine, the UK version replaced that with a Blu-ray logo (most likely because Blu-ray was the only format in common between the two UK SteelBook releases). The UK version was also less glossy and featured a small “frame” around the cover art. The main art sat slightly lower than the frame. This “framed” version of the SteelBook was the version (albeit sometimes with different spines) that was found worldwide, making the American version a bit of an anomaly.



*Solo* (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018) – Zavvi exclusive SteelBook



*Solo* (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2018) – Zavvi exclusive SteelBook

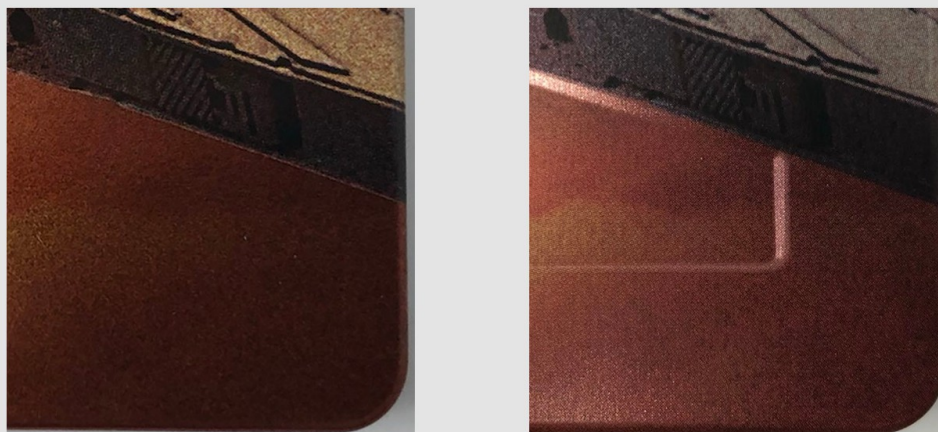




Zavvi exclusive UK *Solo* SteelBooks with J-cards – 4K (left) and 3D (right)



SteelBook comparison: U.S. (left) vs. UK (right) – Notice the (admittedly tough to see in print) embossed frame on the less glossy UK version.



Surface comparison: smooth U.S. version (left) vs. embossed UK version (right)

Fans looking for unusual (and somewhat banal) variants should also be aware of another pair of UK releases for *Solo*. In the UK (and a few other countries), Sky Group operated a streaming platform and discs-by-mail service called Sky Store. By 2018, much of Sky Store’s business model was focused on streaming, but they offered an interesting option for customers that might seem backward (not meaning “old fashioned” but “reversed” in this case) to American collectors. As we’ve already seen, it was not common for physical home media releases in the UK to include digital copies as part of the purchase. The “buy physical, get digital free” approach was something more common in the U.S. and Japan. However, Sky Store offered a similar, reversed approach, known as “Buy & Keep.” A fan could purchase (rather than just rent) a digital copy of a film, then receive a physical copy by mail for a small additional fee. For previous *Star Wars* films, this was offered, but the copies that arrived by mail were essentially identical to those purchased at retail, just with a small “not for resale” note on the back. Starting with *Solo*, however, the Buy & Keep copies from Sky Store began to be labeled on their covers to differentiate them from retail releases. In the case of *Solo*, both DVD and Blu-ray copies were available this way, and while the discs inside matched their retail counterparts, both cases (neither of which had a slipcover) bore a prominent red strip at the top with “not for resale” written in white letters. The label stretched across the front and spine of each case, stating “not for resale” on both, but the warning did not continue onto the back of either case. For most fans, that branding made these less desirable than retail copies (especially since the Blu-ray version lacked a slipcover), but for collectors on the hunt for every possible cover variant, these were two more releases to track down.



Sky Store “Buy & Keep” *Solo* packaging variants: Blu-ray (left) and DVD (right)



As they had since *Rogue One*, Sainsbury's offered a free copy of the junior novelization of the film (by *Death Troopers*, *Red Harvest*, and *Maul: Lockdown* scribe Joe Schreiber) with purchase of the film at one of their stores. Unlike the American version, which used American version B poster art for its cover, the UK version used the similarly-posed artwork from the IMAX poster without the *Millennium Falcon* silhouette frame around it.



*Solo* junior novelization comparison – U.S. paperback (left) vs. UK paperback provided free with purchase of the film at Sainsbury's (right)

Unfortunately, *Solo* did not receive a *Big Sleeve Edition*. The product line had ended in the months since TLJ's home video launch.

### Meanwhile in Japan (2018)

As noted previously, the excellent product line that had included the TFA and RO *Premium Limited Box Editions* and TLJ's *Premium Box Set (Limited Edition)* ended after TLJ. Thus, *Solo* lacked any similar release. However, the film was available with various bonus items through sites like Amazon Japan. To keep our examination consistent, we'll look at the most elaborate *Solo* release from Japan's launch products.

The most elaborate version of *Solo* that was available was simply a SteelBook release, purchase of which also provided various artwork goodies: a small sticker (3.88 in. x 2.25 in.) of an alternative *Solo* logo (with the *Millennium Falcon* inside it) with Han in silhouette; a postcard-sized (5.69 in. x 4.13 in.) *Millennium Falcon* concept art card; and five (8.25 in. x 11.69 in.) art cards. These larger art cards featured Han with his stolen



landspeeder, Qi'ra (also with the stolen speeder), Lando with the *Millennium Falcon*, Chewbacca with a kod'yok skull, and a range trooper, all against backgrounds designed to look like sabacc cards. The actual SteelBook was similar to the UK version (i.e. not glossy and with the “frame” on the cover), but its spine bore character images instead of text, making it language independent. The character images themselves were sourced from a series of posters from the Cannes Film Festival in France. Disc labels, meanwhile, were similar to the ones we’ve seen already, using the American-esque transparent interior for the logo, rather than the UK’s black interior.

The film’s digital code slip (for use with MovieNEX in Japan) featured Han from the same Chinese character poster series as used for the Target exclusive. An advertising booklet was also included, which prominently featured an advertisement (using poster art) for the first season of *Star Wars: Resistance*.



*Solo* (Japanese Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, Digital, 2018)



SteelBook spine comparison:  
U.S. (left); UK (center); and Japan (right)

Notice that all included the Lucasfilm logo at the top. The UK and Japan included the Blu-ray symbol at the bottom, while the U.S. had an Ultra HD Blu-ray symbol. Both the U.S. and UK had the *Solo* logo, while the Japanese version included character portraits of (top to bottom) Han Solo, Chewbacca, Qi'ra, Tobias Beckett, Val, Lando Calrissian, and L3-37.

What made this SteelBook particularly interesting was that it included *three* film discs (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray 3D, and Blu-ray), alongside the Blu-ray bonus features disc and digital copy code. This eliminated the frustration many had with Zavvi's UK SteelBooks that separated 4K and 3D copies into two separate purchases.



Art cards, postcard, and sticker

### Meanwhile in South Korea (2018)

In South Korea, *Solo* reached home video on Oct. 24, 2018, with four different releases, which could be considered incremental steps in terms of content and formats. The first was a DVD-only release. The Region 3 DVD, bearing a label with art from the American version B poster, came in a standard DVD case. Case art was similar to its American counterpart (albeit with the title in Korean and no “DVD-only” branding at the top). For this and all other South Korean *Solo* releases, the logo, whether in English or Korean, used a transparent background, rather than black. As has been the case with all of the Disney era *Star Wars* DVD releases we’ve seen from South Korea so far, this one came with a slipcover (featuring version C poster artwork, akin to the Target exclusive version from the U.S., with a Korean logo). This release included an insert that opened to reveal character profiles in Korean. Art for the characters was taken from the Chinese poster series, which had also been used for the American Target exclusive. A shot of Lando and L3-37 taking the *Millennium Falcon* into hyperspace filled out much of the lower section with some more Korean text.



*Solo* (South Korean DVD, 2018)





Insert (interior)

As in the UK, the next step up in media format was a Blu-ray copy that included the Blu-ray film and bonus features discs. No digital copy was included (as usual). Of interest to collectors was that the slipcover for the Blu-ray release resembled a “cleaner” version of that found in many regions, while the clear case inside featured art that was more akin to the bonus features disc label (i.e. the “gun-toting” poster art with the actual blaster and arm holding it removed). The Blu-ray case was also clear, rather than blue. Interior art was a blurry shot of the *Millennium Falcon* in flight.



*Solo* (South Korean Blu-ray, 2018)

South Korea then also saw a release billed as “2D + 3D,” similar to the UK Blu-ray 3D package but in much nicer packaging. The outer slipcover bore artwork from the Chinese version A poster, while the inner case (which was again clear) bore the Han Solo artwork from China’s character posters. Interior art presented Han and Chewie from behind. Unlike in most regions, the Blu-ray 3D disc label was essentially just a reworked version of the Blu-ray film disc label, rather than the more common, international version A (“Han and Chewie beneath the *Falcon*”) artwork. The Blu-ray 3D disc, like the standard Blu-ray discs, was region-free.



*Solo* (South Korean Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)

A final *Solo* release from South Korea actually topped the Japanese SteelBook release. This version included the Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray 3D, and Blu-ray film discs, along with the Blu-ray bonus features disc, which were all contained in a SteelBook similar to that of the UK (in terms of cover and spine). The SteelBook was then inserted inside a slipcover that featured artwork from the American version B poster. The slipcover also contained a gallery book for the film, which used cover art from the “Solo” poster of the so-called “crew” poster series (a main character against a cloud-draped background of almost one solid color, as in the French Cannes Film Festival posters but with us seeing that image through a cutout on a paper-esque surface that created a hole in the shape of the character’s name). Without any MovieNEX “box” or Blufans “One Click” package for the film, this stood out as one of the nicest ways to acquire *Solo* in multiple formats (including Blu-ray 3D, which was not available at all on the American market).





### Meanwhile in Spain (2018)

The home video launch of *Solo* in Spain presented an interesting twist for home video collectors. Typically, *Star Wars* film names were translated into the languages of various countries. That wasn't at all unusual. However, *Solo: A Star Wars Story* used the actual surname (bizarrely granted as it was) of the lead character as its primary title. One would think that this would simply have meant that in Spain the film would have retained the *Solo* title without translation, then simply translated *A Star Wars Story* into Spanish. However, the film was actually retitled in Spain. It wasn't *Solo* but *Han Solo*. Again, that was a proper name that did not need translation, so products coming out of Spain for the film bore the title *Han Solo: una historia de Star Wars*, prominently proclaiming the *Han Solo* portion of the title. This has made Spanish copies of *Solo* (er, *Han Solo*) a bit more sought after in English-speaking countries, since the primary title was essentially a variant on the original title of the film.

In the case of the example image used here, notice that this was a Spanish SteelBook, containing the film on Blu-ray 3D and Blu-ray, along with the Blu-ray bonus features disc. The SteelBook was identical to that of the UK (including its spine, meaning that it bore the English *Solo* logo instead of the Spanish *Han Solo* logo) but came in a J-card specific to Spain, so that the J-card was where the *Han Solo* logo (filled in with black like the UK *Solo* logo) could be found. The same Spanish logo could also be found on all three discs.



*Han Solo* (Spanish Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2018)

And, yes, for those wondering, if you turned on European Spanish subtitle options for *Solo* on its Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray 3D, or Blu-ray film discs from various regions, the title that appeared over the streets of Corellia at the beginning of the film *did* change from *Solo* to *Han Solo*.<sup>64</sup>

### Meanwhile in Turkey (2018)

In Turkey, the film's title was *Han Solo: Bir Star Wars Hikayesi*, which provides another quick example of the full name title in action, this time in both two-line and single-line formats on the Turkish DVD release of the film. The case and label used artwork similar to the UK version (i.e. no need for a bar at the top of the case to announce that this was a DVD release, required ratings for the region included on the case, and the film's logo in yellow with black filler). In this instance, the Region 2 DVD used the English *Solo* logo, while the case used the two-line *Han Solo* logo on its cover and a single-line version of the logo on its spine.

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<sup>64</sup> You're totally going to try it now, aren't you? It works for other languages too!





*Han Solo* (Turkish DVD, 2018)

Logo (double-line) from cover

Logo (single-line) from spine

### Conclusion: 3D's Never Really Gone (if Global Releases Continue)

2018's *Star Wars* releases will probably always leave American *Star Wars* home video collectors with mixed feelings, quite apart from the rather divisive attitudes in fandom toward both *The Last Jedi* and, to a lesser extent, *Solo*. 3D televisions had never really caught on in the United States, leaving the days of the Blu-ray 3D format on our shores numbered. The writing had been on the wall for a while, but fans of 3D home viewing hoped (in contemporarily-recognized vain, to be sure) that *Episodes VII – IX* would not be another instance of a trilogy that that was incomplete in a particular format, akin to the *Prequel Trilogy* on VHS. Like how collectors addressed the lack of *Revenge of the Sith* on VHS in America by purchasing copies from places like the UK, fans could still purchase Blu-ray 3D copies of new *Star Wars* releases from other countries and import them. In fact, it was an even better option this time, since those region-free or Region A Blu-ray 3D discs could be used in American players, while PAL copies of ROTS had looked great on shelves but lacked any viewing functionality on American NTSC VHS players. It was a loss for the American market, but it wasn't a *total* loss for American 3D fans, so its sting was perhaps felt less than it otherwise might have been.

On the other hand, 4K was becoming the new standard for home viewing. Streaming media players (e.g. Roku, Apple TV) were offering newer models with 4K viewing, and video game consoles were starting to



catch up, albeit with mixed capabilities.<sup>65</sup> Just like with 3D, fans would need both a player and a TV capable of 4K, but this was an enhancement to the home theater experience that affected far more content being brought into our homes (both via the internet and on physical discs) than 3D had. It promised to be an upgrade that would have longevity far beyond the limited life span of Blu-ray 3D.

New *Star Wars* films on home video now looked better than ever before, surpassing even full HD, but as with any jump to a new format, a major question lingered: When would the previous eight live action *Star Wars* films be released in 4K and in what form?

Disney was about to answer that question with the launch of its own brand new streaming service. The era of Disney+ was nearly upon us.

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<sup>65</sup> Microsoft's original Xbox One console (2013) did not offer 4K content at all, but its two later upgrades (the Xbox One S in 2016 and Xbox One X in 2017) both played not only digital 4K content but Ultra HD Blu-rays as well, making them go-to consoles for fans seeking multi-functional UHD Blu-ray players, similar to how Sony's PlayStation 3 had been a primary Blu-ray player for many during the previous generation of video game consoles. By contrast, the PlayStation 4 (2013) could eventually play 4K media, while the PlayStation 4 Pro (2016) could also play games in 4K, but neither PlayStation 4 model could play Ultra HD Blu-rays. It is noteworthy that all of these console models could play Blu-ray 3D discs, and the PlayStation 4 consoles allowed 3D viewing on both a 3D television/projector and the PlayStation VR peripheral, which had its overall experience enhanced when used with the PlayStation 4 Pro.



## 9 ALL TOGETHER NOW<sup>66</sup>

(2019 – 2020)

For over three decades of physical home video releases (1982 – 2015), full *Star Wars* films had been distributed solely through 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment or its various previous incarnations<sup>67</sup>. With the purchase of Lucasfilm by the Walt Disney Company in 2012, the path for future live action *Star Wars* film releases split. Physical releases of George Lucas' six live action films (and digital releases of ANH) remained with 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment. Digital releases of Lucas' other five live action *Star Wars* films joined physical and digital releases of Disney's new films under the auspices of Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment.

In early Nov. 2017, reports began to emerge suggesting that these two companies (and the divergent paths for *Star Wars* films on home video) would not remain separate for much longer. Just one month later, unprecedented cooperation between the two companies was seen through Walmart's exclusive Blu-ray and DVD reissues, wherein 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment products were bundled with Disney's own *Forces of*

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<sup>66</sup> Kudos to anyone who recognized the source of that title: the original (before a strange 2019 resurrection for a single comic) final issue (107) of the very first Marvel Comics *Star Wars* series back in 1986.

<sup>67</sup> We've seen them throughout the preceding chapters: 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox Video; CBS/Fox Video; and Fox Video.



*Destiny, Vol. 1* as a bonus DVD.<sup>68</sup> In early 2019, the deal that was first hinted at in those reports 16 months earlier finally bore fruit, and the entertainment landscape experienced a seismic shift.

### **The Tale of the Mouse Who Swallowed (Some of) the Fox (2019)**

As those reports in 2017 had first made clear, Walt Disney Company had set its sights on purchasing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox, one of the two corporate entities (along with News Corp) that had emerged from the split of Rupert Murdoch's massive News Corporation in 2013. Among the assets controlled by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox was the Fox Entertainment Group, which included such assets the FOX television network, National Geographic Partners, and (of great interest to *Star Wars* fans) the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox film studio.

To say that "Disney bought Fox," as the merger is so often described, would be inaccurate, at least if we aren't clarifying which "Fox" we mean. The House of Mouse did *not* gobble up 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox whole. The latter's entertainment assets were to be sold off in chunks. Disney would acquire many of these assets (e.g. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, FX Networks, National Geographic Partners), while Sinclair Broadcast Group would acquire regional Fox Sports Network (FSN) channels, Comcast would acquire the company's stake in Britain's Sky Limited media group, and other remaining assets (non-regional Fox Sports Media, Fox News Media, and others) would become Fox Corporation (informally referred to by many at the time as "New Fox"). This shattering of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox finally concluded in Mar. 2019.

Prior to this acquisition, *A New Hope* had been locked into a distribution contract that kept control of all distribution of the film with 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox in perpetuity. The physical distribution rights for the *Prequel Trilogy*, *TESB*, and *ROTJ* were to be held by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox until 2020. With the acquisition of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox by Walt Disney Company, these barriers to massive *Star Wars* boxed sets were ripped from their foundations, mere months before the *Skywalker Saga* (*Episodes I – IX*) would come to an end in theaters with *The Rise of Skywalker*.

### **Stealth and Stupidity (2019)**

A *Skywalker Saga* boxed set would have to wait until 2020, but with the distribution rights for all of the live action films now held by Disney, it was little surprise that a wave of disc reissues through Walt Disney Studios

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<sup>68</sup> See the chapter *Enter: Disney*.

Home Entertainment came before the end of 2019. What *was* a surprise (and a debacle) was how they were handled.

Most new *Star Wars* home video releases had received at least *some* official attention through *Star Wars* media and social media channels, even if that attention was limited to a simple announcement that the products were available or coming soon. In fact, it was that typical pattern of giving new releases attention that drove the massive bootlegging of fraudulent *The Complete Saga* DVD sets (which do *not* officially exist) from 2015 onward.<sup>69</sup> Barely publicizing the 2015 *The Complete Saga* Blu-ray reissue left many erroneously believing that a DVD version must also exist. That, though, was an aberration, not standard practice. Typically, new releases *would* receive at least moderate attention.

That made it strange when, in the third quarter of 2019, rumors started to circulate that a new wave of reissued *Star Wars* films on Blu-ray and/or DVD was coming. Week after week, though, no official announcement came. Then, finally, on Sept. 22, 2019, out of nowhere (at least if one only consulted official *Star Wars* sources), a huge wave of *twenty* new *Star Wars* home video releases hit store shelves all at once. It was the largest “stealth” release of American *Star Wars* home video products to date.<sup>70</sup>

This unprecedented, unannounced wave of releases included ten DVD-only reissues and ten single-disc Blu-ray reissues, one of each for *Episodes I – VIII* and both anthology films. This appeared to many to be a cash grab by Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, but I tend to believe that this was largely about Disney making sure that their own branding would be front and center on all current film releases going forward, rather than store shelves still being filled with *Star Wars* products bearing 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment branding, even if they now owned 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For more on the official Blu-ray release that led to this confusion, see the chapter *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I*. For more on this specific DVD bootleg, see the chapter *This is the Way* in *Volume III*.

<sup>70</sup> I would hope it will go down in history as the largest “stealth” release of American *Star Wars* home video products *ever*, including past, present, *and future*, but I wouldn't put anything past Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment and some of their exclusive partners (*cough*, Walmart, *cough*) after this late 2019 debacle.

<sup>71</sup> We will soon see that rushing out these reissues in late 2019 would cause confusion when 4K releases with similar packaging arrived on home video just six months later. (Foreign releases would make this even more confusing...)



TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, ROTJ, TFA, TLJ, RO, and *Solo* (DVD, 2019)

Each DVD release was merely a reissue of the current DVD version of a given film (2011 cuts of *Episodes I – VI* that were first available on DVD in 2013 and the same discs as in the initial releases of TFA, RO, TLJ, and *Solo*). The discs for *Episodes I – VI* bore new labels, while the newer films retained their original labels, and all were included in DVD cases with new, matching cover art (a poster style image, heavily leaning toward a single color, surrounded by a black border and Disney’s standard DVD-only indicators).

The new disc labels featured the Naboo duel<sup>72</sup> (TPM), launch of

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<sup>72</sup> This was the same shot used for previous releases, such as for the bonus features



Republic forces from Coruscant (AOTC), Anakin and Obi-Wan discussing the Jedi Council's request that the former spy on Palpatine (ROTS), Leia inserting the Death Star plans into R2-D2 (ANH), the closing shot of the heroes looking into space (TESB), and the droids approaching Jabba's palace (ROTJ).

Each DVD release included a code for Disney Movie Rewards<sup>73</sup> points. The actual slip was a uniform, blue and gray, Disney style with a tagline at the top, the program's logo, the code box, and then a series of five vertical images from Disney properties (Thor to represent Marvel Studios, BB-8 to represent *Star Wars*, Simba to represent Walt Disney Animation Studios, Miguel to represent Disney Pixar, and Jack Sparrow to represent Disney's other live action films).



Example: ANH (DVD, 2019)

The Blu-ray releases were also reissues with similar new packaging and

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disc in the film's original DVD releases (2001, 2002, and 2008). See the chapter *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I*.

<sup>73</sup> The DMR service was in the midst of a rebranding at the time, relaunching as Disney Movie Insiders four days after this release blitz on Sept. 26, 2019, yet remaining backward compatible with existing DMR codes.

Disney's *Multi-screen Edition* branding. The Blu-rays were the same as those issued since 2011 for Lucas' films, just with new labels (using the same art as the new DVD labels), while the Disney era films were all their original Blu-ray film discs with their original labels. (Yes, for TFA this meant another reissue of the Apr. 2016 TFA Blu-ray film disc that was missing the audio commentary that only appeared on the updated *3D Collector's Edition's* disc from Nov. 2016.) What was striking about the Disney era films was that these were *only* the film discs in the Blu-ray releases, meaning that the Blu-ray bonus feature discs were nowhere to be found, thus making these substandard physical releases if compared to their original 2016 – 2018 counterparts (even if one ignored the lack of pack-in DVDs as in the initial releases of TFA and RO).



TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, and ROTJ (Blu-ray, Digital, 2019)

However, all was not lost for those seeking bonus features or extra value. For the first time ever for the *Prequel* and *Original Trilogies*, the *Multi-screen Editions* in this product wave included digital copy codes, which also redeemed for points via Disney Movie Rewards. The *Sequel Trilogy* and anthology films also included such codes, but this was par for the course for them. Never before, though, had digital copies been included with any release of *Episodes I – VI*, due to how distribution rights had been divided between digital and physical releases (except in the case of ANH). The



digital copies were the same (for the moment) as the original 2015 digital releases for the Lucas era films and the same as their existing digital releases for the Disney era films, meaning that fans had plenty of bonus features to enjoy for all ten films, just not on physical discs this time.

Before leaving the concept of the digital codes, we should note that the ANH code sheet looked quite different from the other nine films. Rather than a standard Movies Anywhere and DMR slip, the ANH slip used the *Star Wars* logo (with the first and last letters of only “Star” spreading out to each side) against a starfield. The “Redeem your digital movie code” statement and the note beneath about how the code was part of a “combination purchase” were moved to the top, directly above the logo. The “terms and conditions” text was moved all the way to the bottom, where all Disney Movie Rewards text had been entirely removed. The lower third included very brief instructions on how to redeem the code, a note that digital bonus items might not be available through all providers, and the code box itself. On the other hand, the other films used a more familiar Movies Anywhere and DMR slip design with a few alterations. The banner that typically provided an image from the film's cover and its logo was replaced by a generic *Star Wars* logo banner. A statement about how not all bonus materials may be available through all providers was added in yellow text directly above the code box. The legalese relating to terms of service between the redemption instructions and the DMR section was also expanded.



TFA, TLJ, RO, and *Solo* (Blu-ray, Digital, 2019) – These were merely repackaged Blu-ray film discs (with redesigned code slips) from each film's original release. Bonus features Blu-ray discs were not included.

This release was a bit frustrating for collectors due to being reissues (yet again), but we had dealt with that so many times before that it was



something we were certainly used to by this point. The lack of any kind of actual announcement of the product line was what rankled, along with many stores only getting *some* of the films instead of all of them, plus some stores not even realizing there were new products to put on shelves at all due to them being released on a Sunday.<sup>74</sup>

But they weren't done yet.



Example: ANH (Blu-ray, Digital, 2019)

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<sup>74</sup> U.S. home video releases were typically on Tuesdays.

## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases



2019 TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, and ROTJ Blu-ray labels



Label comparison: Blu-ray (left) vs. DVD (right)



Digital code slip comparison: ANH (left) vs. non-ANH (right)

Less than one month later, in the first half of Oct. 2019, exclusive versions of three of those *Multi-screen* editions began to appear at a small percentage of Walmart stores across the country. They included branding that commemorated the *Skywalker Saga*, and each included an exclusive postcard-sized (5.75 in. x 4.5 in.) lithograph of concept art from the film. (These could be identified by a sticker on their slipcovers that indicated that an exclusive lithograph was inside and that these were found “only at Walmart,” while showing a preview image of the lithograph next to a *Skywalker Saga Commemorative Edition* logo.) Strangely, while the focus was on the *Skywalker Saga* as a whole, it appeared that only the *Original Trilogy* films had gotten a Walmart exclusive this time. As with the regular releases the previous month, no announcements were made about these exclusives whatsoever.

It was at this point that Walmart’s distribution process failed fans miserably. Very few stores actually carried *any* of these exclusives (and hadn’t carried the regular versions yet either), and even stores that *did* carry the *Original Trilogy* exclusives tended to only have one or two of them. Rarely, if ever, did a single store receive stock for all three, and stock that *was* received was often less than five copies per film at a given store. Meanwhile, ordering via the Walmart website would only provide the regular releases, not the retail chain’s exclusives. Frustration mounted.

But, wait, they *still* weren’t done.

Shortly thereafter, in early Nov. 2019, other unannounced Walmart exclusives began to appear, this time for the remaining *Skywalker Saga* films (TPM, AOTC, ROTS, TFA, and TLJ). As before, distribution was terrible, leading many collectors at the time to coordinate online to help each other hunt down all eight of these Walmart-only products. Thankfully, at least for those being driven to new heights of annoyance with Walmart (which was really saying something), no such exclusives existed for *Rogue One* or *Solo*.<sup>75</sup>

The lithographs themselves included concept art of Anakin’s podracer (TPM), the Battle of Geonosis (AOTC), the Mustafar duel (ROTS), an X-wing (ANH), an AT-AT and T-47 snowspeeder at the Battle of Hoth (TESB), speederbikes (ROTJ), Kylo Ren with his lightsaber in the snow of Starkiller Base (TFA), and Luke meditating during or immediately after his Force projection between Ahch-To and Crait (TLJ). Each image was bordered in white with credits on the bottom right and the film’s logo on the bottom left.

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<sup>75</sup> Of course, with nothing announced, the only way to be sure was to keep an ear to the ground within fandom and make sure no one actually spotted such releases.



## A Saga on Home Video: A Fan's Guide to U.S. *Star Wars* Home Video Releases

To sum it up: a massive stealth release had been followed by a large, Walmart exclusive product wave that seemed to be divided into two smaller waves, without *any* official word on the subject through the usual channels. It was a moment that broke many collectors' faith (if they had any to start with) in Walmart as a reliable distributor of new *Star Wars* home video releases. It wasn't until immediately *after* Christmas that year (no, not *before*, which would've made much more sense) that most Walmarts finally received any stock at all of their retailer exclusive versions, often in small amounts but (blissfully) for all eight instead of only a few films per store.



TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, ROTJ, TFA, and TLJ  
(Blu-ray, Digital, 2019) – Walmart exclusives

Sticker on packaging to indicate Walmart exclusive versions



What *should* have been a triumphant moment for Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, and what *was* a major turning point in *Star Wars* home video releases due to Lucas' films including both physical and digital copies together for the first time, had been forever marred by non-existent communication and horrible distribution of both regular and exclusive releases. We could only hope that the release of *The Rise of Skywalker* and inevitable *Skywalker Saga* boxed set(s) would be handled better. It would have been quite difficult for them to have been handled any worse.



Walmart exclusive lithographs

### For a More Digital Age (2019)

Since at least as early as 2014, Walt Disney Company had contented itself with TV shows based on its properties, such as Marvel Cinematic Universe series like *Daredevil*, being produced as exclusives for various streaming services. Even the sixth season of *The Clone Wars* (AKA *The Lost Missions*) was originally exclusive to Netflix in the U.S. However, in the years since *The Lost Missions* premiered in 2014 (one year before *Daredevil*'s first season), it became clear that the streaming platform market was broadening, and company-specific streaming services like CBS All Access and DC Universe were the next frontier for delivering content, especially exclusive fare.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, on Nov. 12, 2019, Disney's own streaming service, Disney+, launched on the American market. The platform launched with the first episode of a new *Star Wars* television series (as the term "television" had been slowly redefined to include streaming services), *The Mandalorian*, with the promise of a seventh, final season of *The Clone Wars* to premiere the following February.

Both *The Mandalorian* and *The Clone Wars* will be addressed in later chapters.<sup>77</sup> What is relevant to our discussion of the live action films is that Disney+ launched with eight of the ten live action films thus far. (TLJ and *Solo* were tied up with a Netflix exclusivity deal until finally being freed to join Disney+ on Dec. 26, 2019, and July 9<sup>78</sup>, 2020, respectively.) The films that were available at launch via Disney+ were the eight that had not yet received any form of 4K release. That changed with Disney+, which streamed each of them in 4K (if a subscriber's specific device was capable of doing so). What was even more surprising was that *Episodes I – VI* had been changed *again*, and it was George Lucas – mostly gone from Lucasfilm

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<sup>76</sup> That isn't to say that broader streaming services weren't on Disney's radar. When they purchased the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox assets that included 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, they also acquired the company's 30% stake in Hulu. Disney already had its own 30% stake, which meant that Disney now had a controlling 60% interest in Hulu. (As for CBS All Access, it became Paramount+ in 2021, and original series from DC Universe switched to HBO Max in 2020. This streaming era was pretty volatile.)

<sup>77</sup> See the chapters *Empire of Streams* and *Rewriting the Clone Wars* in *Volume III*.

<sup>78</sup> On May 19, 2020, it was announced that *Solo*'s Disney+ premiere was being bumped back one day to July 10, 2020.



for several years now – who had “tinkered” with the films one last time.

**Forever Tinkering:  
The Lucas Films in 4K (2019)**

Fans had long been aware that there had been a plan in the early 2010s to re-release each of Lucas’ live action films in theaters in 3D. In Feb. 2012, TPM had been released in 3D as planned, but the other films had not followed. AOTC and ROTS were originally screened in 3D at *Star Wars* Celebration conventions<sup>79</sup> and a very small number of special events. None saw Blu-ray 3D release, and there was no way to even be certain that 3D conversion had actually been completed for the *Original Trilogy* at all.

Part of the process of remastering the films to prepare them for a 3D release, whether or not 3D conversion was ever actually completed, had included creating a new, better looking, higher resolution version of each film.<sup>80</sup> For TPM, ANH, TESB, and ROTJ, this primarily involved a new scan and recompositing of the films. For AOTC and ROTS, which had been filmed digitally in 1080p, this involved upsampling. For all six, color grading for HDR was also completed.<sup>81</sup>

These new masters became the basis for the 4K releases that premiered on Disney+ on Nov. 12, 2019, and later saw physical release on Mar. 31, 2020.

The remastering managed to finally correct color issues with the films that had been present with the previous master (such as Leia’s face being extremely pink during the Battle of Yavin). The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox fanfare (removed from digital copies of all but ANH since 2015’s digital launch)

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<sup>79</sup> AOTC was first shown in 3D at Celebration Europe II in 2013, while ROTS debuted in 3D at the first Celebration Anaheim in 2015.

<sup>80</sup> The 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD cuts, subsequent 2011 Blu-ray cuts, and the 2015 digital cuts had all been based on a 1080p master that was originally made for the 2004 release (scaled down for DVD). This was finally a new 4K scan of the *Original Trilogy* films to give them a “native” (rather than “upscaled”) 4K presentation.

<sup>81</sup> I try to avoid getting overly technical on these aspects of the various releases. I’d suggest checking out the reviews of these releases on places like *The Digital Bits* if you’d care to dive into the deep end from a technical standpoint.

was back, but the “A News Corporation Company” line was removed from the bottom.<sup>82</sup> The Lucasfilm logo was also updated to the version Disney had been using since TFA.

The most notable change was a final bit of tinkering done by Lucas before Lucasfilm was sold to Disney, while these new masters were being created. Immediately before firing on Han (and being killed by Han a split-second later), Greedo now uttered a phrase for which the subtitles provided no translation: “ma klounkee.” The term, which roughly translates in Huttese as “It’ll be the end of you” (per dialogue from Sebulba in TPM), has colloquially been written most often as “Maclunkey,” hence this cut of the film being known as the “Maclunkey Edition” to many.<sup>83</sup>

The color corrections were welcome. The little tweaks here and there to fix tiny issues were also nice touches. The addition of “ma klounkee” was simply bizarre. Lucas had managed one last addition to the film that started it all, and it felt just as superfluous as many of the changes in the 2011 cuts.

### **For a More Digital Age (2019)**

When Disney+ launched, it was the only way to see the new versions of Lucas’ films with colors corrected and Greedo getting in a last verbal jab before being blasted. However, within days of their streaming premiere, digital purchase platforms began to slowly replace the digital copies that had been available since 2015 with these updated, 2019 versions of the films. This did *not* involve offering up new versions for sale separately. Instead, the original files were simply replaced by updated ones, causing those original versions from 2015 to become entirely unavailable.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, since these masters first emerged via Disney+ in 2019, the logo during the fanfare still read “20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.” In Jan. 2020, Disney announced that 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox would be renamed “20<sup>th</sup> Century Studios,” which makes one wonder whether any further updates to *Episodes I – VI* will ever emerge. If so, would the fanfare segment change again to match the new name?

<sup>83</sup> I prefer my own nomenclature, which continues to build over time so that this was the *Even More Special Maclunkey Edition*.

<sup>84</sup> While this was shock to home video fans, *Star Wars* comic fans had already experienced a similar event. In Mar. 2018, the 13<sup>th</sup> issue of Marvel Comics’ *Darth Vader: Dark Lord of the Sith* had kicked off a new storyline, *Burning Seas*. The first printing of the comic and the initial digital comic files through services like

This was done with no warning at all. Some fans had previously downloaded the 2015 versions of the films with their truncated fanfare (sans 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox opening) on the few services that actually allowed downloading instead of just streaming (e.g. iTunes), which allowed them to retain copies of these cuts. However, all digital versions available for streaming or downloading on platforms like iTunes, Amazon Video, etc. were updated to the 2019 versions. As far as official access to the 2015 digital cuts of the films, they had essentially been erased from existence.<sup>85</sup>

For many, this simply reinforced the idea that digital content was only secure so long as the platform it was purchased through survived, retained legal right to provide that content, and didn't alter or update that content, with or without the consent<sup>86</sup> of the buyer. If the 4K versions of the films had made the case for subscribing to Disney+, those cuts wiping out the 2015 versions that fans had *paid* for (or redeemed for via the Sept. – Nov. 2019 reissues) on other platforms had served as a rallying cry to hold off the death of physical media for as long as possible.

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Amazon's Comixology had included two references to the comic now being set three years after ROTS, while a reference was made to Wilhuff Tarkin as "Grand Moff." The issue also included a brief appearance by the Inquisitor known as the Sixth Brother. Since the Sixth Brother had already been killed in the *Absoka* novel, set two years earlier, and the title of "Grand Moff" should not have existed for another two years, the pages were altered to change the text to set the story earlier and replace "Grand Moff" with "Governor." Collectors of physical comics could *choose* to purchase future printings of the story to see these changes, while keeping their first printings with the original text intact, but those who were reading digitally simply discovered that the issue they had purchased on Mar. 14, 2018, which included the original text, had been replaced with a new digital file that included the changes, as if the original pages had never existed.

<sup>85</sup> Bonus points if you just heard Dr. Emmett L. Brown's voice in your head with the little "tinkling" *Back to the Future* music immediately thereafter.

<sup>86</sup> Of course, terms of service for most of these platforms made the possibility of changes to (or removal of) purchased content something that everyone had already agreed to upon clicking "accept" when confronted with a wall of legalese during account setup. Technically, we were warned that it could happen, even if few ever read that warning.



On a more positive note, Disney+ did not simply provide the films in a vacuum, as most streaming services (e.g. Netflix) would have. Instead, the films included sections of “extras.” While these sections have in some cases evolved over time, as of Sept. 2021, the following extras were available for each film.

For all six of Lucas' films, a trailer for the 2015 digital release of that individual film (rather than all six collectively) was included. All deleted scenes that we would soon see on the 2020 bonus features disc for each film (covered later this chapter) were present with their respective films, except “Stormtrooper Search” for ANH.

For TPM and ROTJ, nothing beyond the aforementioned 2015 trailer and deleted scenes was included.

For AOTC, two classic documentary segments, *State of the Art* and *Films are Not Released: They Escape*, were also included.

For ROTS, History Channel's *Star Wars Tech* was included, which, while odd, would also be included on the 2020 ROTS bonus features disc (making it maybe a little less odd).<sup>87</sup>

For ANH, content was quite extensive. Several trailers and TV spots were present beyond the one for the 2015 digital release. These included: the 1977 launch trailer; the 1997 *Special Edition* trailer (for the full trilogy); the “Adventure” TV spot; the “Farmboy” TV spot; and a creepy (in retrospect) TV spot called “Forbidden Love” that played up the idea of Luke and Leia being in love. Six items from *The Collection* on *The Complete Saga* were carried over: Darth Vader's TIE fighter model; Death Star laser tower model; holo-chess set; Ketwol mask; landspeeder prototype model; and R2-D2. All six interviews from *The Complete Saga* were included, along with the Harrison Ford interview that had previously been part of *The Complete Saga*'s bonus content for ROTJ. The *Anatomy of a Dewback* documentary was included, as it would be on the 2020 bonus features disc. *The Characters of Star Wars*, a featurette from the 2004 *Original Trilogy* DVD set's bonus features was included, as was the featurette *Star Wars Gallery with Ralph McQuarrie* from 1993's *The Definitive Collection* LaserDisc set.<sup>88</sup> Strangely, all six of the *Discoveries from Inside* videos from the 2015 *Digital*

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<sup>87</sup> See the chapter *A Cantina Full of Oddballs* in *Volume III* for more on *Star Wars Tech*.

<sup>88</sup> See the chapters *The Original... One Last Time* and *Rise of DVD, Demise of VHS* in *Volume I* for more information on these earlier sets, respectively.

*Movie Collection* were included with ANH, rather than spread out to their respective films. Finally, an altered, HD version of the film's *Navajo Edition* was included.

For TESB, the only included item beyond the 2015 trailer and deleted scenes was *A Conversation with the Masters* from *The Complete Saga*.

TFA, *Rogue One*, and TLJ (added the next month) carried over some features from recent releases with some tiny new surprises.

TFA included: all nine deleted scenes from the *3D Collector's Edition*; the ability to watch with J.J. Abrams commentary; *The Scavenger and the Stormtrooper*; the film's trailer ("It's true... all of it."); and a strange little video from the official Disney YouTube channel that retold TFA's story as part of a series called (no, this is not a joke) *Disney as Told by Emoji*.

*Rogue One* carried over *Rogue Connections*, all ten *Stories* featurettes, the two Target exclusive featurettes (*Inside the Creature Shop* and *Digital Storytelling*), the two *Designing Rogue One* picture galleries from iTunes, and the film's full trailer.

When TLJ joined the service on Dec. 26, 2019, it also included its own version of *Disney as Told by Emoji* and its full trailer, though the rest of its extras came from the home video release. *The Director and the Jedi* was carried over in full, which was somewhat impressive. The ability to watch with Rian Johnson's commentary was included, as was the ability to watch a score-only version of the film (which would be part of the 2020 bonus features disc for the film and a point of contention for those hoping for an updated, individual release of TLJ, as we will soon see). All 14 of the deleted scenes from the Blu-ray bonus disc carried over, both with and without Rian Johnson's commentary, though his introduction to the deleted scenes did not.

When *Solo* finally arrived the following July, all eight of the deleted/extended scenes from the Blu-ray bonus features disc carried over to Disney+, alongside the roundtable discussion. The film's full trailer was also included. Unfortunately, only one of the eight featurettes from the Blu-ray bonus features disc was brought over to the streaming service: *Team Chewie*.

### **Every Saga Has an Ending (2020)**

Four years and two days after *The Force Awakens* brought *Star Wars* films back into theaters to launch the *Sequel Trilogy*<sup>89</sup>, the final episode of the

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<sup>89</sup> Or 42 years, 209 days (15,550 days total) after ANH had launched the *Skywalker Saga* in 1977.

*Skywalker Saga* brought the new trilogy to a close for American moviegoers. *The Rise of Skywalker* opened across the nation on Dec. 20, 2019. It was a moment fans had long awaited: the end of the *Sequel Trilogy*; the end of the *Skywalker Saga*; and the first film that would premiere on home video in an era when all eleven live action *Star Wars* films were in the hands of a single distributor.

For TROS itself, the changes wrought by the purchase of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox (and more) by Walt Disney Company had very little impact. *Episode IX*, just like its *Sequel Trilogy* and anthology brethren, was released on home video under Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment. As such, familiar patterns held true for collectors who had been paying attention since 2016's original TFA home video product launch.

*The Rise of Skywalker* was originally scheduled to be released digitally on Mar. 17, 2020, followed by its physical release exactly two weeks later (similar to *The Last Jedi*) on Mar. 31. However, global events altered those digital release plans. Late 2019 had seen the emergence of a new global health threat, the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. By early March, the disease had been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization. Quarantines and other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 went into effect in many countries, including a similar ramp-up of closures (such as many public school systems) and “shelter in place” or “stay at home” orders in the most affected American states. On Mar. 13, the Friday before the planned TROS digital launch (and two years to the day since the digital launch of TLJ), U.S. President Donald J. Trump declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a national emergency. With many Americans advised to self-quarantine and otherwise practice “social distancing,” while so many schools were closing for weeks at a time (and many eventually for the rest of the school year), Disney announced two major films coming to digital platforms early for fans looking for some badly-needed escapism. Early on Mar. 13, the day of the declaration of emergency, it was announced that *Frozen II*, which had originally been scheduled to join Disney+ on Jun. 26, would instead be added to the service on Mar. 15, over three full months early.<sup>90</sup> Later that same evening, Disney also released TROS and two new *Star Wars* film bundles across digital platforms four days in advance of *The Rise of Skywalker*'s planned launch.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> It was actually added even earlier. The announcement said Mar. 15, but it was added on Mar. 14 instead, the day after the announcement.

<sup>91</sup> “A surprise to be sure... but a welcome one.” This was presented as an act of



For those keeping track, this meant that TROS was originally to arrive on digital platforms 88 days after its theatrical release, but that became 84 due to this pandemic-driven change, allowing TROS to set the current record for a *Star Wars* theatrical film (live action or animated) being available at home after its premiere in theaters.<sup>92</sup>

### **For a More Digital Age (2020)**

*The Rise of Skywalker* was available through the typical digital platforms of the time. Preordering via the Microsoft Store provided immediate access to what the platform called the *Legacy* featurette, which turned out to just be a video (originally just called *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker Featurette*) that had been released via the official *Star Wars* YouTube channel back on Nov. 28, 2019. This was the featurette that many derided as “sanitized.” It included footage of Harrison Ford walking toward the camera on the ANH Death Star set with his arms around Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher, which we had seen in previous documentaries. This time, though, Ford’s cigarette had been digitally removed from the footage.

Purchasing the film through Walmart’s Vudu platform provided an extra featurette, entitled *End of the Saga*.<sup>93</sup> The iTunes release included three still photo galleries: production photography (89), posters (22), and concept art (70). Amazon’s release, as usual, included X-ray mode. Movies Anywhere made an extra short featurette available, *A Look Back: Lando’s*

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kindness to fans, though one could also argue that the move may have helped prompt more digital purchases of TROS in a time when Disney’s other revenue sources were being hit hard as their theme parks closed worldwide due to COVID-19. Disney soon also released *Onward*, which had only premiered in theaters on Mar. 6, 2020, via digital purchase on Mar. 20, followed by its arrival on Disney+ on Apr. 3. A new practice of simultaneously releasing a film in theaters and on Disney+ with “Premier Access” (i.e. an extra \$29.99 charge) began with *Mulan* on Sept. 4, but while it continued through the release of *Black Widow* (July 9, 2021), it had been somewhat scaled back by the time the next MCU film, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* premiered only in theaters a year after *Mulan* on Sept. 3, 2021.

<sup>92</sup> This beat the record of 88 days set by *The Clone Wars* in 2008 (and then tied by *The Last Jedi* in 2018), albeit digitally, not physically.

<sup>93</sup> Shortly thereafter in Apr. 2020, it was announced that Fandango Now (another service linked to Movies Anywhere) would be purchasing Vudu from Walmart.

*Journey*. All digital copies included a digital-only featurette on John Williams, entitled *The Maestro's Finale*.

A nine-film *Skywalker Saga* bundle and a three-film *Sequel Trilogy* bundle, the latter of which had no physical counterpart, were made available the same day.

The film came to Disney+ two months before *Solo*<sup>94</sup> to make the entire *Skywalker Saga* available on the service as of May 4 (as in “May the Fourth be with you!”), 2020. When it did, all six of the bonus features from the film’s Blu-ray bonus features disc carried over, along with the digital exclusive *The Maestro's Finale*, and the film’s full trailer (“The story lives forever.”).



TROS (DVD, 2020)

The physical release of TROS took place as planned on Mar. 31, 2020. The most basic way to purchase TROS was again a DVD-only release, though its existence was frequently missing within the marketing and product listings for the film’s home media blitz. No digital copy was included, but a code was provided to redeem for Disney Movie Insiders

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<sup>94</sup> As noted previously, *Solo* was still tied up in a Netflix exclusivity deal for another couple of months.

points. The disc, which featured Finn (on Pasaana) on its label, included only the film without any special features. The DVD case did not include a slipcover. The case art and code slip shared the same artwork, drawn from the film's version B theatrical poster.

True to form with *The Last Jedi* and *Solo*, the film's "standard" version was another *Multi-screen Edition*, which included the film on Blu-ray, a Blu-ray full of bonus features, and a code redeemable for a digital copy and Disney Movie Insiders points. The film disc did not include a commentary, but the bonus features disc contained substantial behind-the-scenes material, including a feature-length documentary (*The Skywalker Legacy*) and five featurettes (*Pasaana Pursuit: Creating the Speeder Chase*, *Aliens in the Desert*, *D-O: Key to the Past*, *Warwick & Son*, and *Cast of Creatures*).

The cover and embossed slipcover featured identical artwork, similar to the DVD-only release (i.e. version B poster art). Both discs bore labels designed with similar iconography to the *Skywalker Saga* release from the same day, which we will examine shortly. The film Blu-ray disc featured Rey on Pasaana, while the bonus features Blu-ray showed director J.J. Abrams talking with Joonas Suotamo (Chewbacca). Notably, the image on the bonus features disc was grayscale like all of the new or reauthored bonus features discs for the giant boxed set, making it the only Disney era film thus far to have never had a bonus features Blu-ray disc with color (rather than grayscale) artwork.



TROS (Blu-ray, Digital, 2020)

The code slip was another update to the standardized form we've seen previously for Movies Anywhere. The entire bottom section, which had



previously discussed Disney Movie Rewards, was replaced with a similar area to address Disney Movie Insiders. When compared to the Sept. 2019 digital copy code slips (aside from ANH), the key difference to the middle section was the removal of the yellow text about bonuses not being available on all platforms. The section that had previously included a simple *Star Wars* logo (where even earlier releases had film-specific artwork) instead included an image of John Williams and information about the digital exclusive *The Maestro's Finale* featurette.

The most elaborate of the standard releases for TROS was another inappropriately-named *Ultimate Collector's Edition*, which included the film on both Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray, the Blu-ray bonus features disc, and a digital copy and Disney Movie Insiders points code. Unlike TLJ and *Solo*, the slipcover art for the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* differed from that of the *Multi-screen Edition*. While both releases featured the same, version B poster art on their cases, the *Ultimate Collector's Edition's* slipcover featured an image of an X-wing standing off with a Star Destroyer, taken from a poster promoting the film's release with Dolby Cinema sound. The Ultra HD Blu-ray disc label featured a drowned Kylo Ren on Kef Bir.



TROS (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020)

Retailer exclusives followed familiar patterns.

Best Buy's exclusive version of TROS included the same content as the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* in a SteelBook featuring Kylo Ren on the front (wearing his helmet in direct contradiction to the film itself) and Rey on the back, both standing atop the Death Star II wreckage amid the raging waters of Kef Bir. This was peculiar artwork, as it bore a close resemblance to the "Death Star Ruins" poster that was exclusive to the El Capitan Theatre or

the bottom section of the version A (second version)<sup>95</sup> theatrical poster. However, while Kylo Ren's pose was essentially the same as on both of those posters, Rey's pose was rather different. The background (as seen through a torrent of water) was also a TIE fighter (rather than empty space as in the El Capitan Theatre poster or the Death Star II in the second version A poster). The interior featured a shot of Finn, Rey, Chewbacca, and Poe before leaving Ajan Kloss.



TROS (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) – Best Buy exclusive

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<sup>95</sup> This was a poster that featured Kylo Ren and Rey dueling beneath the giant face of Sheev Palpatine (Darth Sidious), which became somewhat controversial when it was discovered that Palpatine was not based on Ian McDiarmid's portrayal of Palpatine in the film but instead on a Hot Toys action figure of the character.





Best Buy exclusive SteelBook (exterior)



Interior

Target continued the style of its TLJ and *Solo* exclusives with similar packaging for their TROS exclusive, which included a gallery book (with cover art that was essentially the version A teaser poster image of the film's logo against a starfield) within its packaging and an exclusive featurette, this time on DVD instead of digital-only (akin to *Rogue One* and TLJ, rather than TFA and *Solo*). Removing the slipcover, which featured the film's RealD 3D exclusive poster art, revealed Rey on the front and Kylo Ren on the back, while opening further revealed Finn and Jannah on the side holding the gallery book and digital code slip, while Poe and Zorii Bliss adorned an opposite flap that folded out yet again to reveal the discs inside. (These were all images from the film's character poster series.) The discs were the same as those found in the *Ultimate Collector's Edition*, along with a Target exclusive DVD (with a plain white label) that included the exclusive featurette, a rather substantial look at the ships and other effects in the film. The featurette bore no name on the disc (either when looking at the label or actually viewing it), but it has since been revealed to have been entitled *A*



*Final Alliance*. This time, the digital code could be used for the typical film, bonus features, and DMI points, but it did *not* include a digital version of *A Final Alliance*, which was only available physically.



TROS (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, DVD, Digital, 2020) – Target exclusive



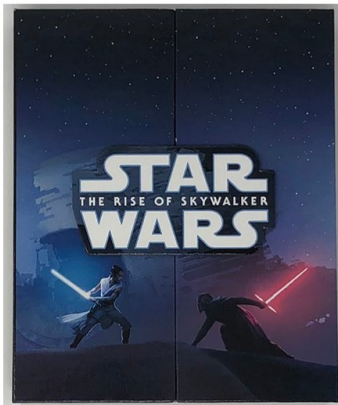
Inner packaging  
(interior)

Inner packaging  
(exterior)

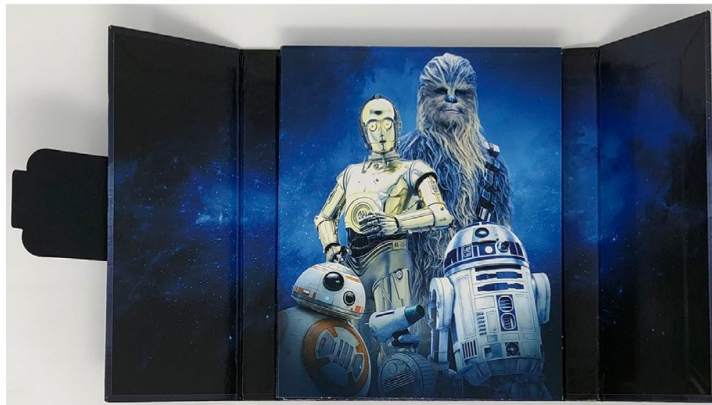


Fans purchasing at Walmart, who were perhaps still wary of the Blu-ray (without digital code), “craptastic” exclusive of *Solo*, were treated this time to what some (myself included) considered the nicest looking U.S. release for TROS. Once more, the discs and code slip included were those from the *Ultimate Collector's Edition*. The packaging featured a cover in two halves,

one side featuring Kylo Ren and the other Rey, with the film's logo in the center. (The combined image of the duel in front of the Death Star II was the artwork from the El Capitan Theatre's exclusive poster.) The logo was a magnetized clasp, allowing the two halves to be folded outward to either side, revealing art of Chewbacca, C-3PO, R2-D2, BB-8, and D-O. That section then unfolded out to the left to reveal two of the three discs and art of Kylo Ren with two Knights of Ren (Cardo and Kuruk). The Ren section then folded open again to reveal the other disc and familiar Kef Bir duel art (from the bottom of the second version A poster) beneath the center and discs on both sides. (The digital film and DMI code slip was tucked against this final layer.) It was by far the nicest of the Walmart exclusives thus far.



TROS (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) – Walmart exclusive



Unclasped, folded out left, then folded out right



Top center section (droids with Chewie) folded out left



Bottom center section (Kylo with Knights of Ren) folded out right (i.e. fully opened)

Strangely, a label variant (likely a misprint) on the Ultra HD Blu-ray in the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* often distinguished it from the otherwise identical UHD discs in the retailer exclusives. Whereas the 4K disc in each exclusive release featured the TROS label with a *Star Wars* logo that had a gradient coloration (i.e. not all one solid color but shifting from light to



dark gray as one moved toward the edges of the logo), the *Star Wars* logo on the disc label for the standard release was one solid color (light gray) for many copies in the initial print run.<sup>96</sup>



Label comparison: error (no gradient) label (left) vs. correct (gradient) label (right)

Disney Store and shopDisney offered a set of four 14 in. x 10 in. lithographs with preorders (with only the *Multi-screen Edition* available for the promotion), continuing the tradition that began (for *Star Wars*) with TFA in 2016. Shots included: Rey; C-3PO with BB-8; First Order stormtroopers; and a group shot of Rey, Poe, Finn, and C-3PO as they encountered the vexus.

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<sup>96</sup> I completely missed this at the time, but a viewer of my YouTube video on these releases, Rebecca Samuels, caught it and brought it to my attention. It does not appear to have affected *all* of the copies from the release day (i.e. in the first print run), but it certainly affected the majority of them from what I've seen.





Lithograph folder



2020 Disney Store lithograph seal



TROS Disney Store and shopDisney preorder lithographs

Disney Movie Club provided a 6.75 in. x 5 in. mini-lithograph with preorders, just as it had for each film since *Rogue One*. The lithograph design changed this time, however. Rather than a full-sized, flat image with the film's title overlaid on the picture in one corner, the mini-lithograph for TROS featured an embossed image from the film (with a strange silver background instead of the Kef Bir sky as seen in the film) across the top half, while the bottom half was simply white with an embossed, silver TROS logo. Even the outer envelope changed from the previous white to purple. This made for a more elaborate item, though there did not seem to be much fandom reaction to the change, positive or negative.



Disney Movie Club mini-lithograph: inside (left) vs. outside (right) its envelope

Another change from Disney Movie Club was less welcome but certainly not surprising. Fans who held out hope for an exclusive *Multi-screen Edition* that would throw in a DVD copy like DMC had for *TLJ* and *Solo* were disappointed to find that no such version existed. Only the standard Blu-ray/digital *Multi-screen Edition*, *Ultimate Collector's Edition*, and DVD-only version were available, making this the first Disney-era *Star Wars* film to premiere on home video without a Blu-ray/DVD/digital combo pack available on the American market, even as a retailer exclusive.

Fans fond of variant covers or crafts were once again provided with free covers that could be downloaded from the official *Star Wars* website. Three were offered, each featuring a piece of concept art with a small snippet of script from the relevant scene on the back. Like the Phil Noto cover for *Solo*, each of these covers included both an insert (to be printed on regular paper) for a standard Blu-ray case and a slipcover (best printed on cardstock). The concept art used for the three covers included: “Pasaana Chase” by Stephen Tappin; “Death Star Duel” by Adam Brockbank; and “Kijimi Vision” by Christian Alzmann.



Downloadable “Pasaana Chase” slipcover and case insert

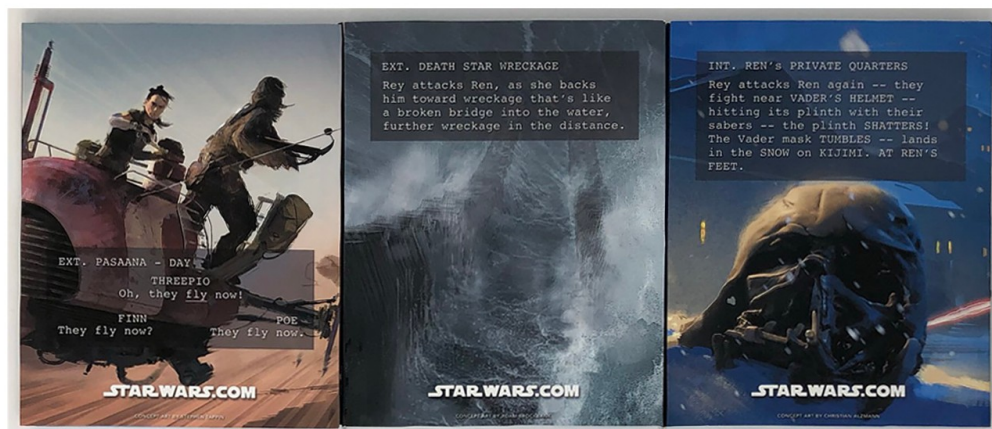




Downloadable “Death Star Duel” slipcover and case insert



Downloadable “Kijimi Vision” slipcover and case insert



Reverse of downloadable slipcovers – Note script excerpts.

### Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2020)

*The Rise of Skywalker* arrived on home video in the UK on Apr. 20, 2020, and followed familiar patterns there as well. As usual, no digital copies were



included in any of the various releases.

The UK received five standard releases. A DVD-only copy was the most basic, alongside two regular Blu-ray releases (Blu-ray film and bonus features discs), a Blu-ray 3D release, and an Ultra HD Blu-ray release. The DVD-only copy was interesting in that it (like the *Skywalker Saga* DVD set released on the same day) was Region 0 (i.e. region-free), rather than the more typical Region 2 of UK releases. (Unfortunately for U.S. viewers, it was still PAL.) Label and case artwork resembled the American version (i.e. Finn on Pasaana on the label and version B poster artwork for the cover).



TROS (UK DVD, 2020)

The two regular Blu-ray releases had identical case art and content, but followed the patterns of TFA and TLJ by having two different slipcovers available: a Resistance cover featuring Rey and a First Order cover featuring Kylo Ren. When placed side-by-side, the two slipcovers formed an image of Rey vs. Kylo Ren on solid ground in front of the Death Star wreckage. These were essentially close-up images from the El Capitan Theatre poster. The interior case art was the same version B poster art as seen on the DVD-only release and on most standard releases worldwide.



TROS (UK Blu-ray, 2020) –  
Resistance slipcover



TROS (UK Blu-ray, 2020) –  
First Order slipcover



Combined slipcover image

The DVD and Blu-ray releases could also be acquired through Sky Store's "Buy & Keep" program. Cover art noted these as Buy & Keep copies in small, white print at the bottom, which was far less conspicuous than the big red bars with white text of the *Solo* releases. Unlike initial retail copies, the Blu-ray Buy & Keep release did not include either slipcover.





TROS (UK DVD, 2020) –  
“Buy & Keep” version



TROS (UK Blu-ray, 2020) –  
“Buy & Keep” version



“Buy & Keep” Blu-ray product label (on bottom of case front)



“Buy & Keep” DVD product label (on bottom of case front)

The Ultra HD Blu-ray release, unlike the U.S. version, did not have different slipcover art from its inner case. Instead, it bore the same artwork on its case and slipcover as the DVD release and the inner case for both Blu-ray releases (i.e. version B poster artwork), just with standard 4K Ultra HD branding at the top of the slipcover to match the case inside. This package, as usual, included the Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs, along with the Blu-ray bonus features disc.





TROS (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020)

The UK also had a standard Blu-ray 3D release of the film, which included the two Blu-ray discs and Blu-ray 3D film disc. Package design used the same cover art as the other releases with the typical red area on the inner case insert and red border on the slipcover that had been the standard style since *Rogue One*. The Blu-ray 3D disc label was essentially just the UHD disc label without the black “4K Ultra HD” iconography section on the bottom.



TROS (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2020)

As they had since TLJ, Zavvi offered two exclusive, standard (“Limited Edition”) SteelBook releases: Ultra HD Blu-ray or Blu-ray 3D, both with the two Blu-ray discs included. Art was nearly identical to the U.S. SteelBook (except a slight difference in labeling on the spine, which we will see when comparing the U.S., UK, and Japanese versions in another sidebar).



TROS (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2020)  
– Zavvi exclusive



TROS (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) – Zavvi exclusive



Zavvi exclusive UK TROS SteelBooks with J-cards – 4K (left) and 3D (right)

Zavvi had also begun to dabble in the “super duper SteelBook” market shortly after the release of *Solo*. For TROS, this meant releasing two “Collector’s Edition” (as opposed to the standard “Limited Edition”) SteelBook packages. In each case, one of their already-exclusive SteelBook releases (4K or 3D, each with the standard Blu-rays) was packed in a special metal slipcase with two enamel badges (Kylo Ren and Sith Trooper helmets) and four art cards (4.75 in. x 6.13 in.) of helmets (Kylo Ren, Sith



Trooper, and two First Order stormtroopers). One side of the outer case featured Kylo Ren, while the other featured the Sith Trooper. This artwork was similar to the enamel pins, and neither could be seen as a true “front” or “back,” as the case was designed to face either direction.

These releases put Zavvi into the company of such “fancy schmancy” SteelBook retailers as Blufans in China or South Korea’s NovaMedia and KimchiDVD. Unfortunately, manufacturing issues plagued these releases, causing them to be delayed from Apr. 20 to mid-June.<sup>97</sup> This was particularly galling to fans who had avoided preordering the Limited Edition SteelBooks to instead preorder the Collector’s Edition SteelBooks, since the delay of the fancier versions was not announced until long after their more mundane counterparts had already sold out. Zavvi’s “first step into a larger world” had briefly led to them tripping over their own feet, but they recovered quickly enough to finally begin shipping the long-awaited Collector’s Editions two months after their expected release.



TROS (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) and TROS (UK Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, 2020) – Zavvi exclusive Collector’s Editions. Both came in identical containers. “Front” or “back” (shown here) could be the “cover” as desired.

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<sup>97</sup> This was not a shock to SteelBook collectors, given that Zavvi had offered previous Collector’s Edition SteelBook releases of films like *Frozen II* that were due prior to the TROS launch, and those items had experienced the same manufacturing issues and long delays.





Both versions with outer cover removed:  
Ultra HD Blu-ray version (left), Blu-ray 3D version (right)



Enamel pins in foam block for storage



Art cards



Interior view from above – Notice separate sections to hold the SteelBook, the art cards, and the foam block holding enamel pins.

Another minor disappointment also affected the UK launch of TROS on home video. Sainsbury's, which had offered free copies of paperback junior novelizations with home video purchases since *Rogue One*, were unable to do so for TROS, due to store closings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Meanwhile in Japan (2020)

Fans who were hoping that perhaps MovieNEX would return to premium box releases for TROS were disappointed (but not surprised) to find that, similar to the Japanese *Solo* lineup, no such product existed. However, also like *Solo*, Japan offered an option for purchasing a SteelBook copy of TROS that included both 4K and 3D copies of the film in the same

package (along with the two standard Blu-rays).



TROS (Japanese Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray 3D, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020)

This Region A release was a language independent SteelBook that lacked a title logo and included character images (from the character poster series) on its spine in lieu of the film's title. The Japanese Blu-ray 3D film disc label, unlike that of most other regions, featured BB-8 and D-O, rather than just reworking the Kylo Ren image from the Ultra HD Blu-ray. The package included an advertising booklet (featuring *The Mandalorian* on the cover), a digital copy code (to be redeemed via MovieNEX via a slip featuring C-3PO and BB-8), and a small sticker to advertise *The Mandalorian*, which was aired on Japan's Disney Deluxe (which was not quite the same as Disney+ but shared similar content at times).





SteelBook spine comparison:  
U.S. (left); UK (center); and Japan (right)

Notice that all included the Lucasfilm logo (at the bottom for the U.S. or top for the others). The UK and Japan included the Blu-ray symbol at the bottom, while the U.S. had an Ultra HD Blu-ray symbol at the top. Both the U.S. and UK had the film's title in English, while the Japanese version included character portraits of (top to bottom) Kylo Ren, Rey, Finn, Poe Dameron, Lando Calrissian, Chewbacca, C-3PO, R2-D2, and BB-8.

Once again, this higher-priced package offered what both the U.S. and UK lacked (a Blu-ray 3D disc that the U.S. never saw, and a way to get both Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray 3D without purchasing separate items as in the UK). However, unlike *Solo*, there wasn't a standard set of bonus items to go with this Japanese TROS release. Instead, buyers could simply purchase the SteelBook on its own or as part of various, higher-priced packages that included anything from a folio (what Americans would call a "folder") to a face towel to Funko Pop figures.<sup>98</sup>

### Meanwhile in South Korea (2020)

In South Korea, the TROS home video lineup seemed a bit subdued relative to previous films. On May 22, 2020, the region saw only three TROS releases, none of which offered either Blu-ray 3D or Ultra HD Blu-ray copies of the film. South Korea's options were limited to just DVD and Blu-ray, albeit with a SteelBook option for the latter.

The DVD-only release, like most of its predecessors, came in a black

<sup>98</sup> As these were essentially "buy the SteelBook and other things as a package deal" situations instead of true bonus items, I will not be covering them here.

DVD case with version B poster artwork similar to the American (et al) cover art, except with the title in Korean. Its slipcover featured art of Kylo Ren and Rey dueling on Kef Bir (from the bottom of the second version A poster), along with the Korean title. The DVD itself had a different label than most regions, showing the duo dueling in front of the Death Star on Kef Bit but on solid ground (from the El Capitan Theatre poster, similar to the combined artwork of the UK slipcovers). An insert was again included that detailed characters from the film, using their character poster art.



TROS (South Korean DVD, 2020)



Insert (interior)

A standard Blu-ray version was released the same day, including the film and bonus features Blu-ray discs, along with a black envelope with the film's English logo against a starfield on the front. The envelope contained 10 small art cards (2.88 in. x 3.56 in.) featuring character poster art, ideally stored in two stacks of five sitting side-by-side in the envelope. Characters who merited art cards included: Kylo Ren; Rey; Finn; Poe Dameron; Lando Calrissian; Chewbacca; C-3PO; R2-D2; BB-8; and D-O.

This release's slipcover and case art both included the film's logo in English with its Korean title beneath, as fans had come to expect. This release's slipcover used the typical (i.e. version B poster) cover art that the DVD version had used for its case, while the Blu-ray release's clear case used art similar to that of the South Korean DVD disc label (i.e. the El Capitan Theatre poster art). The case interior presented a shot of Rey, Poe, Finn, Chewbacca, BB-8, and C-3PO on Ajan Kloss next to the *Millennium Falcon*. Disc labels were similar to their various counterparts worldwide.





TROS (South Korean Blu-ray, 2020)



Art cards

A third option for South Korean fans was a SteelBook release. This release was crafted by SM Life Design Group, which had designed SteelBooks for other distributors in the past and released this as their own version of TROS. A slipcover that used the ReadD 3D exclusive poster art (similar to the American Target exclusive but without a white border this

time) fit over a gallery book and a SteelBook (akin to the UK version) that held the film and bonus features Blu-ray discs, along with the same envelope of art cards as the regular Blu-ray release. The gallery book's cover was an interesting twist on the "X-wing vs. Star Destroyer" artwork found on the American *Ultimate Collector's Edition* in that it used the outline of the Star Destroyer (and others around it) to present Kylo Ren peering out from the "slash," similar to the UK's *Rogue One* Blu-ray slipcover. (This was art from an international theatrical poster, which appeared in locations like France.)

In an interesting twist when compared to most SteelBooks we have seen (aside from those for *Episodes I – VI* in 2015), this SM Life Design Group SteelBook for TROS was not a retailer exclusive. It could be purchased from multiple South Korean retailers.



TROS (South Korean Blu-ray, 2020) – SM Life Design Group SteelBook

Note that this was not a retailer exclusive.

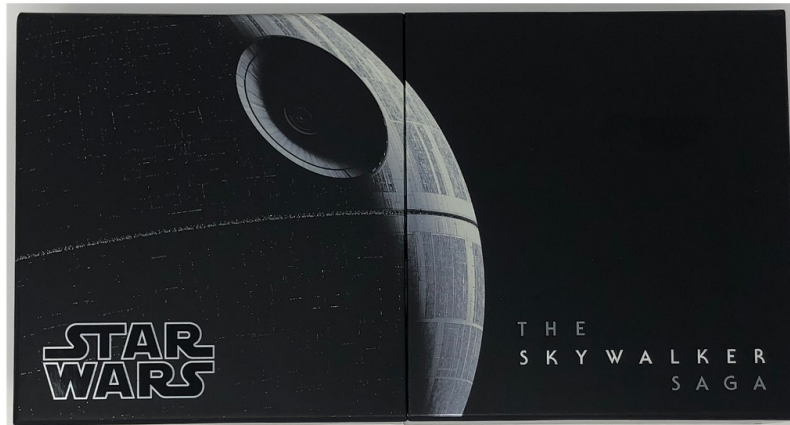
It was a strange release lineup, possibly owing to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Asia, or perhaps due to someone deciding that the region (or maybe even the film itself) did not merit a Blu-ray 3D or Ultra HD Blu-ray release. Whatever the reason, the South Korean TROS products certainly looked nice physically, but they were ultimately disappointing to international collectors and likely South Korean collectors as well, who knew what they were missing, owing to previous Blu-ray 3D and Ultra HD Blu-ray *Star Wars* releases in the region.



### In Space, No One Can Hear Your Wallet Scream (2020)

The home video release of *The Rise of Skywalker* was not an isolated event. If it had been, the sheer number of retailer exclusives and bonuses would already have been an expensive proposition for collectors, just as all of the Disney era *Star Wars* films' home video premieres had been. The arrival of *Episode IX* on home video, however, also opened the door to a boxed set for the complete *Skywalker Saga* (*Episodes I – IX*), something fans had dreamed of for years that had finally become possible when Walt Disney Company purchased 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox among its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox asset acquisitions.

In retrospect, the American market either got off easy or was bereft of options. Whereas some other regions, such as the United Kingdom, had multiple versions of *Skywalker Saga* boxed sets released as part of this home video blitz, the United States had only one: a 27-disc boxed set exclusive to Best Buy. This limited edition set included all nine *Skywalker Saga* films (i.e. all of the live action, theatrical films except *Rogue One* and *Solo*) on Ultra HD Blu-ray, a first for *Episodes I – VII*.



*The Skywalker Saga* (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) – Best Buy exclusive

The 4K discs for *Episodes I – VI* were, as expected, the new cuts that premiered on Disney+ four months earlier. TFA was also technically the Disney+ version, since it was in 4K, but it was not a new cut, just a higher resolution than previous releases. For *The Last Jedi*, the Ultra HD Blu-ray was reauthored. For TROS, it was, of course, the same disc included in the various TROS exclusives and *Ultimate Collector's Edition* the same day. (The TROS label misprint with a solid gray logo that was found on most standard release copies from this first print run also affected the discs found in many early copies of this boxed set.).

No bonus features were included on the Ultra HD Blu-rays. In fact, one feature was cut: the reauthored UHD disc for TLJ no longer supported Dolby Vision HDR. This made the set uniform in its lack of Dolby Vision but also meant that videophiles would need to keep a previous release of



the film (or pick one up soon, as we will see later in this chapter) to have a copy of the film with this superior high dynamic range option.

The Ultra HD Blu-ray discs' labels followed the pattern of previous releases with large, black "4K Ultra HD" areas on the bottom. Label images included: Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi (TPM); Yoda (AOTC); precyborg Darth Vader (ROTS); Obi-Wan vs. Vader (ANH); AT-ATs (TESB); Han Solo (ROTJ); BB-8 (TFA); and the same shots of Rey and Kylo Ren for TLJ and TROS, respectively, as on their other UHD releases. The TLJ label was revised to fit the iconography and logo color scheme of the other discs.



Ultra HD Blu-rays (all newly-authored for 2020)

The other 18 discs were HD (not UHD) Blu-rays: one film disc and one bonus features disc for each film. For *Episodes I – VI*, the film discs were the 2019 Disney+ (AKA “Maclunkey”) versions on Blu-ray for the first time, allowing a version of the film that premiered in a higher resolution (Ultra HD) to be viewed on a lower definition (HD) medium, similar to how the 2011 Blu-ray cuts (HD) were made available on DVD (SD) in 2013. Menus for *Episodes I – VII* were designed to better match those of *Episodes VIII – IX*. The disc labels for *Episodes I – VIII* were similar to those in Sept. 2019 but not quite the same. The updated labels bore a 2020 copyright date (instead of 2019) and moved the image down a bit to allow the film’s logo to be shifted to the top of the label, rather than the bottom.

(More on this and the confusion it caused later in this chapter.) The label for TROS was, of course, the same as that day’s standalone releases.



Blu-ray film discs (all newly-authored for 2020)

The Blu-ray bonus features discs for *Episodes I – VI* were newly-authored with labels similar to the bonus features discs for Disney era releases but with the bottom half (the actual picture) in grayscale instead of color. Unfortunately, the bonus features ranged from old to... older. No new bonus features premiered in this set. Among the recycled bonus features were the *Conversations* and *Discoveries from Inside* that had premiered with digital copies in 2015, which were seeing physical release for the first time.

For the Disney era films, the disc labels matched this style, as one would expect. TFA used the a grayscale version of the art from the *3D Collector's Edition* bonus features disc, while TLJ used the same C-3PO/Johnson image as in 2018, just converted to grayscale. (TROS was the same label as that day’s individual releases.)

This marked the first time that Lucas’ original six films had their own bonus feature Blu-ray discs (rather than simply having one disc for each trilogy), and this was the first time that each of the *Original Trilogy* films had their own bonus features discs at all, if one considered the 2006 and 2008 “unaltered version” bonus discs on DVD to have been alternative film discs, rather than “bonus features” in the traditional sense. While it may be



a bit of information overload, we should take a moment to break down what was actually on these new bonus features discs for each film.



Blu-ray bonus features discs (all newly-authored for 2020)

First, let's save ourselves some time by addressing what all of the bonus discs had in common. They all included that film's *Conversations* and *Discoveries from Inside* featurettes from the *Digital Movie Collection*. These were “main menu” items. The main menu then also included a “legacy content” section, similar to the digital launch in 2015. This section included both *Archive Fly-through* videos (on the discs for TPM and ANH), all interviews, and every item from *The Collection* for each film from *The Complete Saga* (except the look at the “slave Leia” costume for ROTJ<sup>99</sup>), alongside all of the featurettes, documentaries, trailers, etc. from the legacy content of the *Digital Movie Collection*. None of the bonus features discs included a concept art gallery, making those a portion of *The Complete Saga* that did not make the cut this time.

A few (but not all) of the documentaries from the ninth disc of *The*

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<sup>99</sup> This was in keeping with Disney's decision to no longer promote that particular costume in merchandise.



*Complete Saga* made the jump to this new set of bonus discs. *Star Wars Tech* and *Star Warriors* were included on the ROTS bonus features disc. (*Classic Creatures: Return of the Jedi*, *Anatomy of a Dewback*, and *A Conversation with the Masters* were included also, but those fall under the previous comment about items from the *Digital Movie Collection*'s legacy content carrying over.) *The Making of Star Wars as Told by C-3PO and R2-D2*, *SP FX: The Empire Strike Back*, and the *Star Wars Spoofs* program were not carried over from *The Complete Saga* to the new bonus features discs at all.

*George Lucas on the Digital Revolution* (from the bonus content for ROTJ in the *Digital Movie Collection*) made the jump to the bonus features disc for TPM. The oddball *The Art of Attack of the Clones* item from the *Digital Movie Collection* was properly included on the AOTC bonus features disc. The *Scrap Into Gold* installment of *Conversations*, which had not previously been attached to a single film, did not carry over to the new bonus features discs.

One great improvement in the bonus features of these discs when compared to *The Complete Saga* or *Digital Movie Collection* was the handling of deleted and extended scenes. Whereas the *Digital Movie Collection* had dropped deleted scenes from *The Complete Saga* for every film except ANH and ROTJ, this new set of bonus features discs expanded beyond even *The Complete Saga* by including deleted scenes for the prequel films that had not been seen since the 2008 DVD set. (Sadly, it was not all of the deleted scenes from the 2001 – 2008 releases, but it was still more than *The Complete Saga* had offered.)

TPM deleted/extended scenes now numbered 10, having added “The Waterfall Sequence,” “Complete Podrace Grid Sequence,” “Extended Podrace Lap Two,” and “Anakin’s Scuffle with Greedo.” This left out “The Air Taxi Sequence,” which was now integrated into the film, “Dawn Before the Race,” and “Farewell to Jira” from the 2001 DVD release.

AOTC deleted/extended scenes now numbered 9, having added “Jedi Temple Analysis Room,” “Obi-Wan & Mace – Jedi Landing Platform,” “Padmé’s Parents’ House,” and “Dooku Interrogates Padmé.” This left out “Anakin and Padmé on Trial,” “Padmé Addresses the Senate,” “Extended Arrival on Naboo,” and “Padmé’s Bedroom” from the 2002 DVD release.

ROTS deleted/extended scenes now numbered 15, having added “Grievous Slaughters a Jedi/Escape from the General,” “Seeds of Rebellion (Padmé’s Apartment),” “A Plot to Destroy the Jedi?,” and “Exiled to Dagobah.” This left out “A Stirring in the Senate” and “Confronting the Chancellor (Palpatine’s Office)” from the 2005 DVD release.

The Blu-ray film and bonus discs for TFA and TLJ were reauthored. For TFA, all content was the same as that found in the *3D Collector’s Edition* (i.e. J.J. Abrams commentary, plus extra deleted scenes and featurettes). Only menus had changed. This was particularly welcome, given that the original Blu-rays from Apr. 2016 had been reissued repeatedly in the past,

instead of the updated, Nov. 2016 *3D Collector's Edition* discs.



TFA label comparison: 2016 *3D Collector's Edition* (top) vs. 2020 (bottom)

For TLJ, the Blu-ray film disc now included the score-only audio track that had previously been a digital exclusive, while the bonus features Blu-ray now included the *Meet the Porgs* featurette that had previously been a physical-only exclusive from Target (on a separate DVD).



TLJ label comparison: 2018 (top) vs. 2020 (bottom) – Updated discs were available *only* in the *Skywalker Saga* boxed set.

Disc labels for TFA and TLJ were updated to be more in line with the other films in the set, leading to slightly redesigned film labels and bonus feature disc labels with grayscale versions of their previous color photographs.

For TROS, the Blu-ray discs were identical to those in the releases from the same day. The inclusion of previously exclusive featurettes for TFA and TLJ on their updated bonus discs (either in the *3D Collector's Edition* or here, respectively) led some to suspect that the TROS bonus features disc in this set would already include the Target exclusive *A Final Alliance* featurette that was released on DVD the same day, but that was not the case. It was an unrealistic expectation from the start, given that it would have undermined a major selling point of that day's Target exclusive.

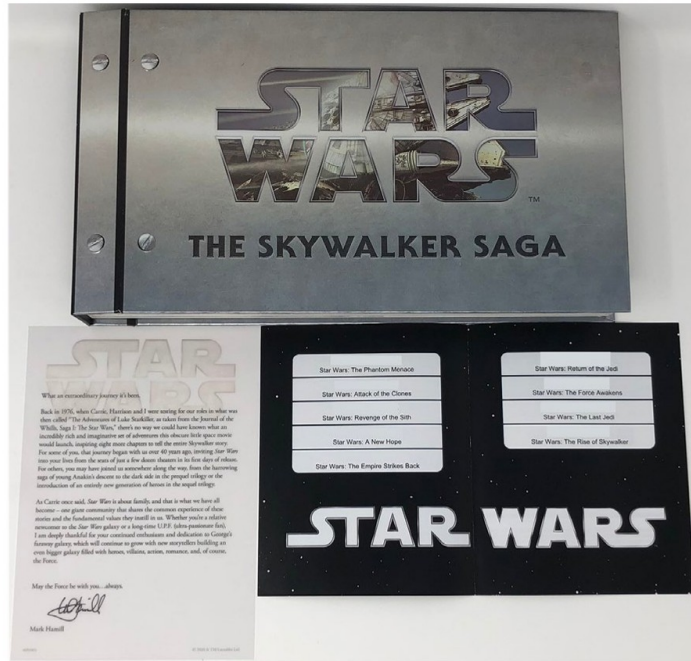
The package also included digital copies and Disney Movie Insiders points via a code slip. This code slip was a bit different than those found in other recent releases, as it folded open to reveal nine codes, one for each film, which all had to be redeemed separately. The front included the blue-to-purple gradient area at the top with the Movies Anywhere logo as expected, and the Disney Movie Insiders section at the bottom was also present. In between, all text was against a single starfield, beginning with "Redeem your 9 digital movie codes," followed by the expected information about this being a "combination package" (so codes weren't meant to be sold separately), instructions to redeem codes, and information about terms of service for redemption. The back of the slip included a blue-to-purple area at the top with the Movies Anywhere tagline, "Your Movies, Together at Last," followed by an image of several platforms (a television, phone, laptop, and tablet with the *Star Wars* logo on their screens, then a generic video game controller). The bottom region was a giant block of legalese. In between was a reminder of platforms that could synchronize through Movies Anywhere. Inside, the slip bore the *Star Wars* logo at the bottom against a starfield, along with areas for codes on both left (*Episodes I – V*) and right (*Episodes VI – IX*) sides.

What was perhaps most personal about the set was a letter from Mark Hamill, similar to how the 1992 *Special Letterbox Collector's Edition* had included a message from George Lucas.

All of these discs were packaged in a large album (an enormous digibook), a sort of "2011 *The Complete Saga* package on steroids." The album featured various pieces of concept art or production photos for each film, and, when closed, simulated the look of having metal covers. The "metallic" cover art for the album included a *Star Wars* logo and the set's name. The *Star Wars* logo was an outline, through which the *Millennium Falcon* could be seen in artwork similar to the slipcover of South Korea's Nova Choice Full Slip B release of TFA. Most of the two-page concept art



or photo spreads included slots for two discs at the top of the right-hand page. These labeled slots housed the Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray copies of each film side-by-side, then pairs of Blu-ray bonus discs (TPM and AOTC, ROTS and ANH, etc.). The odd number of discs in the set left the TROS bonus disc on a page that held only that single disc in a centered slot. This already-elaborate package then fit inside a recessed area within an outer container with two halves on either side that slid closed to form an outer “shell” that featured the first Death Star (for some reason).



Digibook album, letter from Mark Hamill, and fold-out digital code slip



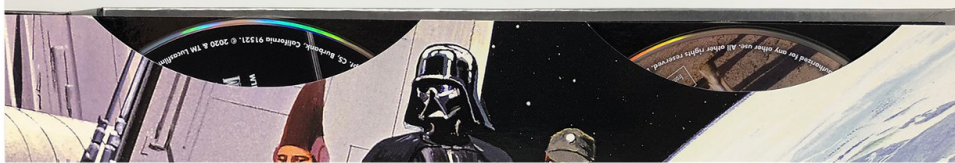
Outer case opened to reveal digibook album (with ribbon for ease of removal)

It was a gorgeous set, but fans who had hoped for new bonus features beyond those already found in previous releases (or the same day's releases in the case of TROS) were disappointed. The digibook nature of the album also made removing discs without getting fingerprints on them rather difficult, even more so than for *The Complete Saga* in 2011. Many fans were also frustrated by a blemish found on the cover of many copies, due to the

pressure sensitive adhesive (PSA or “booger glue”) used to hold the release’s J-card onto the package when still in shrink wrap. Still, it was the only means in the U.S., at least without importing, to own the entire *Skywalker Saga* in a single boxed set. That made it an important home video milestone for the saga. (Of lesser note but still important, it was also the only way in the U.S. to acquire any of the updated discs for *The Last Jedi*.)



Example: Digibook album page for ROTJ



Example: Top of ROTJ page with Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs inserted



Example: Top of ROTJ page without Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs –  
Notice that each slot was labeled to indicate which disc fit into that slot.



With J-card – Unfortunately, holding this C-shaped J-card onto the packaging required a dime-sized dot of PSA, which often left a blemish on the cover.

For a More Digital Age (2020)

By this point, bonus features for digital copies were being updated on the fly, such that when new releases provided new physical bonus features, those were often added to digital copies of the films, even in the case of *Episodes I – VI*, which already had bonus features from the *Digital Movie Collection* release in 2015. Thus, you will find the bonus features, particularly on Lucas' films, to be a mix of what was found in this set and previous carryovers from the *Digital Movie Collection*, allowing the digital copies to include things like concept art galleries that the 2020 bonus feature discs for those films did not include.

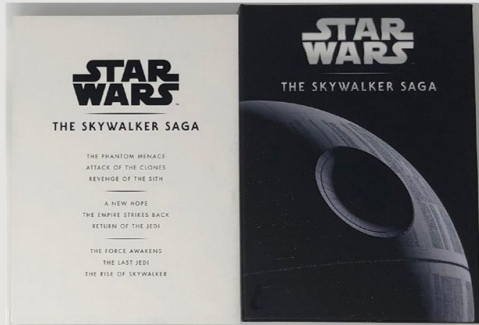
### **Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2020)**

Whereas American fans were given only one option for purchasing the entire *Skywalker Saga* as a single boxed set, the UK had three different options, each essentially corresponding to a particular “generation” of media.

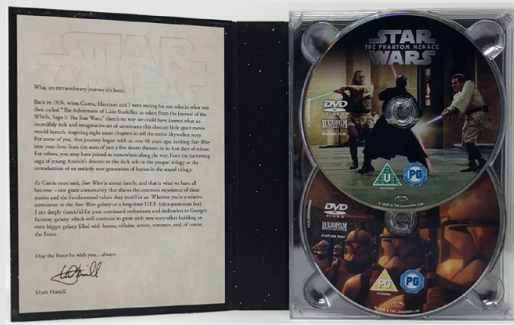
The most basic was a 9-disc DVD-only release. An outer slipcover featuring similar Death Star artwork to the U.S. Best Buy set held an inner album. The album's cover was white with the *Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga* logo and names of each individual film in black with a horizontal line separating trilogies. The album opened to reveal Mark Hamill's letter to fans on the inside cover. Discs were held on clear pages, two at a time (with the exception just one disc on the TROS page). Disc labels were essentially just DVD versions of the Blu-ray labels seen worldwide (with UK and Irish ratings, of course).

Two aspects of this set stand out. First, it gave UK viewers the 2019 “Maclunkey” cuts of *Episodes I – VI* on DVD, which had not happened at all in the United States (but had in regions like Australia, as we will see below). Second, these discs were not the typical Region 2 discs that we had come to expect from UK releases. Instead, they were Region 0, which meant that they were region-free. However, they were still PAL, so American importers would often find that they would play fine on most computers and some players (ones that could handle NTSC, PAL, or SECAM formats) but not in others (most standard players that could only handle the format of a particular region). Still, it was a compact, nice way for fans to acquire *The Skywalker Saga* for a cheaper price if still intending to watch in standard definition.





*The Skywalker Saga* (UK DVD, 2020)  
– album (left) and slipcover (right)



First page of content, including Mark Hamill's letter on interior cover

One should also note that because discs in this DVD set were reauthored to be Region 0, rather than Region 2, this provided an opportunity to update the disc labels for TFA and TLJ, which now joined the *Episodes I – VI* in resembling their Blu-ray counterparts.



TFA label comparison: 2016 Region 2 (left) vs. 2020 Region 0 (right)



TLJ label comparison: 2018 Region 2 (left) vs. 2020 Region 0 (right)

Another option was available for fans who had not yet made the leap to an Ultra HD Blu-ray player or 4K television. This was an 18-disc Blu-ray set, which included the new Blu-ray film and bonus features discs for *Episodes I – IX*. Not quite as compact as the UHD/HD counterpart, this Blu-ray set came in a black container, bearing the same Death Star artwork again on both sides. The top tilted upward from the front to allow the front flap (including the package's logo) to tilt outward and down, revealing Mark Hamill's letter on its interior side. The container held three albums this time, similar in style to the DVD-only set's single album. Each trilogy had its own album, which held all six of that trilogy's discs.



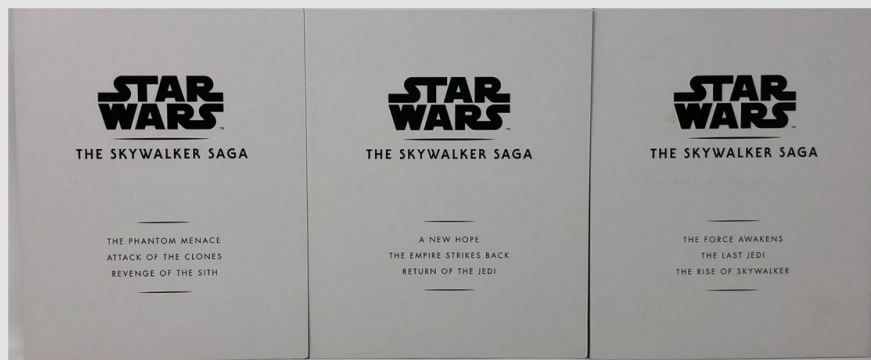
*The Skywalker Saga*  
(UK Blu-ray, 2020)



Side



Interior



Trilogy albums

The final, most elaborate UK version of *The Skywalker Saga* was nearly identical to the American Best Buy set. Exclusive to Amazon UK, this version from across the pond included 27-discs (Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray films discs, along with Blu-ray bonus features discs for each film), held in the same type of giant digibook album (with Mark Hamill's letter slipped into the packaging on its own) that fit into a larger, black container that slid open to left and right to reveal the album. The overall container was a tiny bit deeper than the American set (2.13 in. vs. 2 in.), and the discs bore labels with the requisite British and Irish ratings, but otherwise, the only major thing that officially distinguished this set from its Best Buy counterpart in the U.S. was the lack of digital copies. I say “officially” here because one other aspect did cause this set to sometimes be preferred to the American version. Whereas the J-card on the American set was C-shaped (i.e. a small flap for the front, a flap for the top, and a large flap for the back, but no side flaps at all), the J-card on the UK set was more cup-shaped (i.e. it just slid on from the top without needing to be held on very much). This resulted in the UK set being able to avoid the “booger glue” blemish on the

front that plagued many American sets from poor J-card attachment prior to shrink-wrapping.



*The Skywalker Saga* (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) with J-card

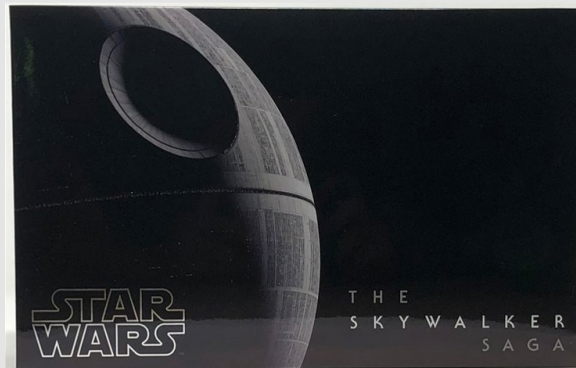
### Meanwhile in Japan (2020)

Japan had provided fans with some rather nice packages over the years. In the Disney era alone, their elaborate, premium box releases of TFA, RO, and TLJ had been quite impressive. Fans' disappointment that such releases did not exist for *Solo* or TROS was palpable. We held out hope that the Japanese market might get at least one more fancy (i.e. fancier than over here) boxed set for *The Skywalker Saga*. If any new release warranted such a treatment, surely it was this one.

Fans were not disappointed, though many watching from the U.S. were a bit perplexed by the product that actually emerged on the Japanese market. Japan had its own version of *The Skywalker Saga* that, at first glance, resembled the large sets found at Best Buy in the U.S. or Amazon UK in the United Kingdom. Any further inspection at all, however, revealed something drastically different.

While the box artwork was the same as that of the American Best Buy set, this box was glossy, which looked much nicer. The box itself was nearly twice as deep (3.81 in. vs. 2 in.) as the American set. On the other hand, it was an inch shorter in width (13.38 in. for the U.S. and UK sets but only 12.38 in. for the Japanese set).





*The Skywalker Saga* (Japanese Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020)

Opening the box revealed a first layer of content: a MovieNEX digital copy code (redeemable in Japan) on a standardized slip; a Japanese *Star Wars* product advertisement; a sticker advertising *The Mandalorian* on Disney Deluxe; the letter from Mark Hamill (in English); and a program booklet with the Death Star artwork repeated on its cover and details about disc content (in Japanese) inside.



“First layer” content

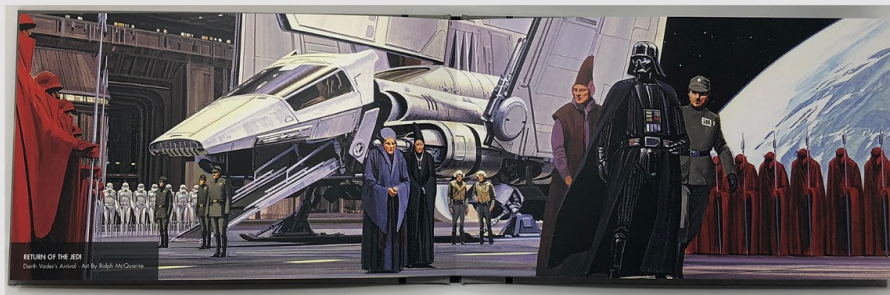


Program booklet (interior)

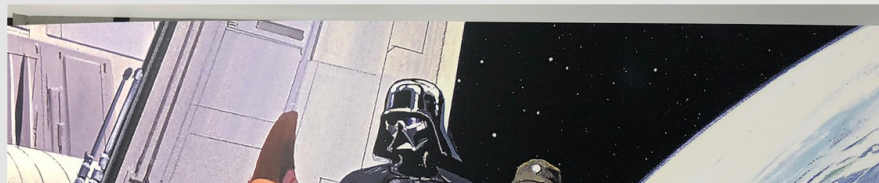
Beneath that layer was what (again, just at first glance) appeared to be the digibook album full of discs that was used in the American and British products. That was not actually the case. Instead, this was a much thinner book (0.56 in. for Japan vs. 2.31 in. for the U.S.), which was protected by a clear plastic slipcover that could be removed upward or downward. This album had the same cover art as the digibook, but instead of thick cardboard pages, these were standard pages (albeit a tiny bit thicker than standard paper) with all of the interior concept art and photographs of the American album but without any discs held inside at all. It was simply an elaborate art book.



Art book (without protective slipcover)



Example: Art book page for ROTJ



Notice the lack of disc slots on the right-hand page.

Beneath the art book were three folding albums, one for each trilogy,

with covers set up in similar style to the UK's Blu-ray set (i.e. plain white with black text and logos proclaiming the names of the films inside). Each album folded open twice (with small black pieces of paper trapped within the folds to protect the product) to reveal all of the discs for that trilogy.



Trilogy albums

This was where things got a little weird (from an American perspective at least).

Each film included *two* discs, not three. This was an 18-disc set: an Ultra HD Blu-ray film disc for each movie, along with that film's Blu-ray bonus features disc. No Blu-ray film discs were included. This left many American fans scratching their heads. This was a much more elaborate package than the American set (and bore a higher price tag, 50,000 yen, which was about \$450 when compared to the Best Buy set's \$250 MSRP). However, it was simultaneously a lesser set by not including Blu-ray copies of the films. Many therefore balked at the price, choosing not to pay an extra \$200 to import this set instead of the U.S. version, due to this "oversight."

But was it an oversight? Of course not. This was intentional. It was perhaps an early sign that the Japanese market for home video was outpacing the American market in its adoption of Ultra HD Blu-ray as the new standard for physical home media.

Whatever it portended in the grand scheme of things, it was damned pretty.





Example: *The Original Trilogy* album (interior) – Notice that the films were in right-to-left order, similar to reading Japanese from right to left.

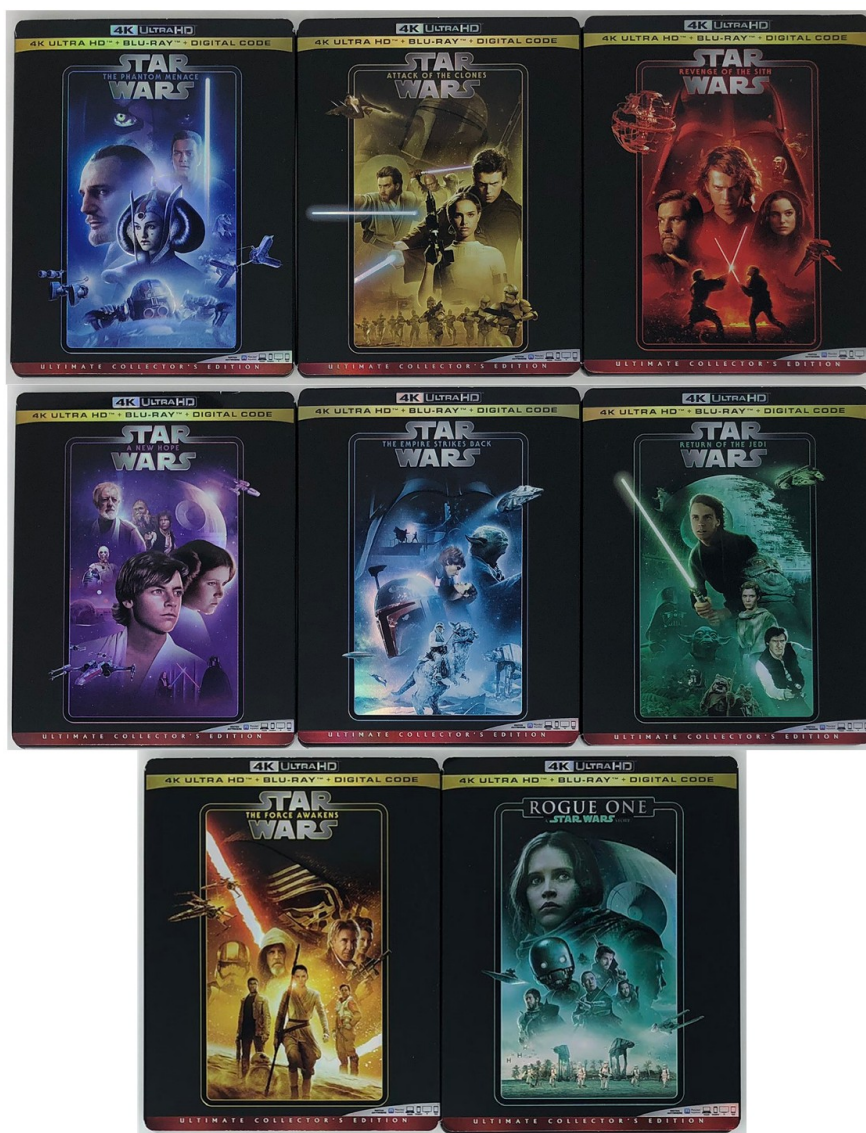
### But Wait, There's More! (2020)

The existence of the Disney+ 4K versions of the eight *Star Wars* live action films that had not yet had an Ultra HD Blu-ray release had given fans hope for a *Skywalker Saga* set that included all nine numbered episodes in 4K. However, this left one film unaccounted for on Ultra HD Blu-ray: *Rogue One*. The first anthology film was not left out of the Great *Star Wars* Home Video Blitz of 2020, nor were fans who might have wanted to own an Ultra HD Blu-ray copy of *Episodes I – VII* without having to buy the pricey *Skywalker Saga* Best Buy set. Each of the eight films that had not previously had an individual Ultra HD Blu-ray release, including *Rogue One*, saw an *Ultimate Collector's Edition* (Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs, Blu-ray bonus features disc, and digital copy with DMI points) released simultaneously with TROS and *The Skywalker Saga*.

The discs for *Episodes I – VII* were the same as those found in the Best Buy *Skywalker Saga* set. For *Rogue One*, this was a new Ultra HD-Blu-ray with its own label in the now-standard style (featuring Jyn Erso at Saw Gerrera's Partisan base), along with reissued copies of the Blu-ray film and bonus features discs that had premiered in 2017, complete with their original labels.<sup>100</sup> All eight films came in standard, black Ultra HD Blu-ray cases with case art and slipcovers that matched the Sept. – Nov. 2019 Blu-

<sup>100</sup> Would it have been asking too much for them to have at least changed the labels a little bit?

ray and DVD releases with *Ultimate Collector's Edition* branding.



TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, ROTJ, TFA,  
and RO (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020)

The paper slips with codes for digital copies and Disney Movie Insiders points were slightly updated from their Sept. 2019 counterparts. The bottom section that had previously discussed Disney Movie Rewards now addressed Disney Movie Insiders. The yellow text about some features not being available across all platforms was removed. The ANH slip was also identical in style to the others this time, rather than unique.

Unfortunately, this packaging similarity would cause some confusion, as the Sept. 2019 *Multi-screen Editions* and DVD-only releases (both of which were the 2011 cuts of Lucas' films) were still on store shelves alongside these Mar. 2020 *Ultimate Collector's Editions* (featuring the 2019 cuts of Lucas'



films on both film discs), meaning that the cut of the film that a buyer would be acquiring would differ, depending upon which of the three current<sup>101</sup> releases they purchased. Similarly, for TFA, which black-bordered release was purchased would determine whether (menu reauthoring aside) Blu-ray content would match discs from Apr. or Nov. 2016.



Example: ANH (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020)

Let's be clear what this meant for *Episodes I – VI*, since this can be *very* confusing. The DVDs were *all* the 2011 cuts. The Ultra HD Blu-rays were *all* the 2019 cuts. The Blu-rays available were what varied. Blu-rays in the 2019 *Multi-screen Edition* releases (with the logos on the *bottoms* and 2019 copyright dates) were the 2011 cuts. Blu-rays in the 2020 *Ultimate Collector's Editions* and *Skywalker Saga* set (with the logos on the *top* and 2020 copyright dates) were the 2019 cuts.

<sup>101</sup> The confusion might have been lessened if we were dealing with a new release and others that were no longer considered “current,” but the fact that these three releases (four if you count the Walmart exclusives from 2019) were not only on shelves concurrently but designed intentionally with similar packaging made this a bit of a mess for those not paying close attention to which cuts could be found in each release.





Packaging comparison: 2019 DVD-only release (top left, 2011 cut); 2020 *Ultimate Collector's Edition* (top right, Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs of the 2019 cut, 2020 Blu-ray bonus disc, and digital copy); 2019 standard *Multi-screen Edition* (bottom left, Blu-ray of the 2011 cut and digital copy); and Walmart exclusive *Multi-screen Edition* (bottom right, same as standard with lithograph)



Label comparison: 2019 DVD (top left); 2020 Ultra HD Blu-ray (top right); 2019 Blu-ray (bottom left); and 2020 Blu-ray (bottom right). – Notice the similarity between the 2019 DVD and Blu-ray labels (logo on bottom), plus the differences between the 2019 (logo on bottom) and 2020 (logo on top) Blu-ray labels.

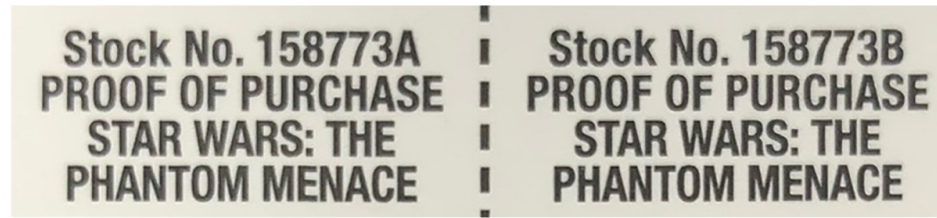


RO (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) – Notice that the Blu-ray discs were identical to previous releases. Only the UHD disc was new to this release.

There was also a minor point of confusion on behalf of those creating



the packaging, as the proof-of-purchase above the barcode on the back of the case for the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* of TESB listed the film as TPM instead.



Proof-of-purchase information from the back of TESB indicated TPM instead.

Speaking of the back of packaging, it should be noted that for *Episodes I – VI*, the back of packaging for the black-bordered DVD and *Multi-screen Edition* releases in 2019 and the subsequent *Ultimate Collector's Edition* releases in 2020 borrowed heavily from the J-cards from the 2015 SteelBook releases, the design for which was also shared by the 2015 individual DVD releases in the UK.<sup>102</sup> It was not an entirely straightforward matter of just reusing the same designs for each of those six films, however. While ROTS used the same top picture and images in the small row beneath, AOTC changed the top image (while keeping the same row of images), TPM and ROTJ changed a single image in the row of smaller images (but kept the large, top image), and both ANH and TESB changed the top image and a single image in the smaller row below. Still, the similarity was noticeable.



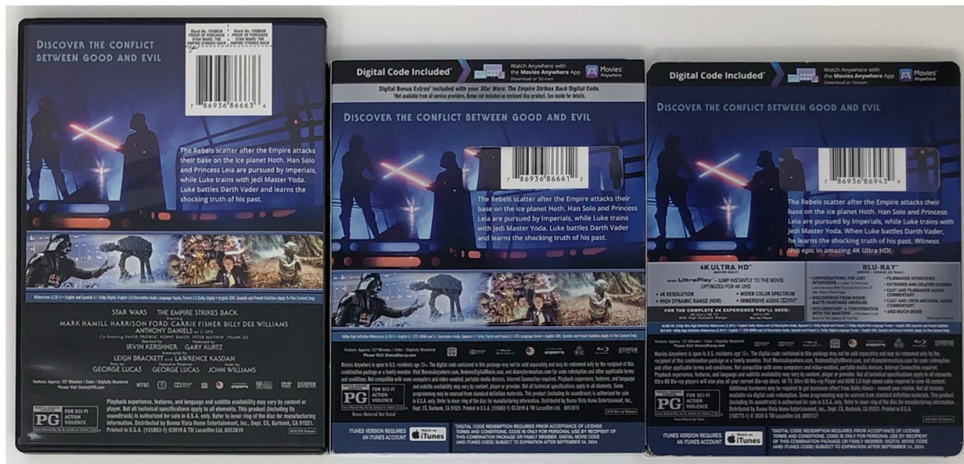
Left to right: TPM cover backs from 2019 U.S. DVD; 2019 U.S. *Multi-screen Edition*; and 2020 U.S. *Ultimate Collector's Edition* (right)

<sup>102</sup> See the chapter *The Lucas Films in HD* in *Volume I*.





For comparison: TPM 2015 UK DVD (left) vs. U.S. SteelBook J-card (right) – Notice that while the 2019 – 2020 versions kept the top image and four of the bottom images, the far left image in the row was swapped out.



Left to right: TESB cover backs from 2019 U.S. DVD; 2019 U.S. Multi-screen Edition; and 2020 U.S. Ultimate Collector's Edition (right)



For comparison: TESB 2015 UK DVD (left) vs. U.S. SteelBook J-card (right) – Notice that while the 2019 – 2020 versions kept three of the bottom images, the far right bottom image and the entire top image were swapped out.

This was a momentous event for *Star Wars* home video collectors. All of the *Star Wars* live action films were under the same roof for the first time, *and* they were also all finally available in glorious 4K in physical form, even the anthology films.

### Meanwhile in Australia (2020)

As if the releases in the U.S. were not confusing enough, the fact that U.S. releases were often considered the templates upon which many international releases were based just served to confuse the situation even more.

Most regions outside the U.S. did not get *any* of the Sept. 2019 reissues that included the 2011 cuts of the films. That had been disappointing in late 2019, but then Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment “corrected” this in some regions by making Apr. 2020 into a thing of home video collecting and budgeting nightmares (even more than it already was in America).

One such region was Australia. On Apr. 1, 2020, just one day after the American home video launch for the TROS (et al) blitz, Australia saw the release of their TROS and *Skywalker Saga* products. They also, like the U.S., saw new releases of *Episodes I – VII* and *Rogue One* in combo packs that included Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray film discs and a Blu-ray bonus features disc. (Digital copies were not included.) However, they *also* received similar UHD/HD releases of TLJ (including the updated discs from the *Skywalker Saga* set) and *Solo* (with an updated bonus features disc label featuring a grayscale *Millennium Falcon* but otherwise unchanged). Even that was not all, though. They also saw the release of separate Blu-ray and DVD (Region 4 PAL) releases for *Episodes I – VIII* and both anthology films. (For TLJ, discs were updated in these releases also.)

In essence, in April 2020, Australia experienced both the Sept. 2019 *and* Mar. 2020 blitzes from the United States (minus certain exclusives) *simultaneously* as a single, enormous blitz to put all other *Star Wars* home video blitzes to shame.

This made things even more confusing for fans who purchased films internationally, since these releases in Australia (and other countries in similar circumstances) included the 2019 Disney+ “Maclunkey” cuts of *Episodes I – VI* in *all three* “black packaging” products. That made the Blu-ray and DVD releases similar in packaging to the American *Multi-screen Editions* and DVD-only releases from Sept. 2019... but with a completely different cut of the films on the actual discs, Australian versions of the 2020 labels, and the Blu-ray bonus features discs included.



TLJ (Australian Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) – Note that the discs were all the updated versions that the U.S. only saw in *The Skywalker Saga*.



*Solo* (Australian Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) – Note that the Blu-ray bonus features disc had a new label, but the contents on the disc were unchanged.

In retrospect, this made the Sept. 2019 releases in the U.S. (and accompanying Walmart exclusives) seem even more premature, not only because U.S. releases would likely have been the new cuts of the films if Disney had waited about six months to release them, but also because releasing them at all when not doing so in most other regions only generated even more confusion (mostly for American fans who heard about the foreign releases and saw the U.S. releases still on store shelves).





ANH (Australian Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) – Note that the content was similar to the American release (new Ultra HD Blu-ray, new Blu-ray bonus features disc, and updated film Blu-ray disc) without a digital copy code.



ANH (Australian Blu-ray, 2020) – Note that the content was different than the “black-bordered” American release. Australia did not get a digital copy code but did have the Blu-ray bonus features disc and updated film Blu-ray disc.



ANH (Australian DVD, 2020) – Note that the content was different than the “black-bordered” American release. Australia received an updated film disc.

On the plus side, fans in the U.S. who were frustrated by the lack of TLJ and *Solo* reissues in the new packaging style (particularly in the case of TLJ when new discs had been authored for *The Skywalker Saga* and these individual foreign releases) could import those from Australia to complete that aspect of their collection until the U.S. could have its own *Ultimate Collector's Edition* reissues later.<sup>103</sup> Of course, those Australian copies included Australian ratings on their covers and lacked slipcovers, but fans had learned from the lack of an American VHS release of *Revenge of the Sith* and recent films on Blu-ray 3D that sometimes one had to bear with the unique features of foreign releases, such as regional ratings on labels or packaging, to fill gaps in their collections.

### Adding Insult to Injury (2020)

As we've seen, the situation for “black-bordered” releases of *Star Wars* home video products from late 2019 and early 2020 was frustrating as of Mar. 31, 2020, when *Episodes I–VII* and *Rogue One* were released as *Ultimate Collector's Editions* that matched the art style of the Sept. 2019 reissues of all of the live action films (except TROS, of course). One aspect of that frustration left room for hope, however. As noted previously, neither *The Last Jedi* nor *Solo* received a reissue of their *Ultimate Collector's Edition* with matching packaging in America, while they did receive similar reissues in places like Australia (see sidebar). American fans began to expect that those

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<sup>103</sup> Even then, the U.S. reissues with new slipcovers were disappointing to say the least. Read on!

two films would soon see reissues in the new packaging, which would provide the opportunity for the updated discs for TLJ to see individual release instead of being available only through the Best Buy exclusive *The Skywalker Saga* boxed set.

Instead of adding an individual option fully in keeping with the Mar. 2020 releases of the other films, though, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment chose to add insult to injury for TLJ and *Solo*. In mid-May 2020, a new version of the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* of *The Last Jedi* began appearing on store shelves as retailers restocked copies of the film. This “new” product included a black-bordered slipcover that allowed the film to match the products released a little over a month earlier for *Episodes I – VII* and *Rogue One*. This was another stealth release with no announcement whatsoever, but it appeared that sketchy reports of a reissue with new packaging (and fan hopes for the same) had been answered!

Well, not quite.



TLJ (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) –

Notice that only the slipcover was different than the 2018 release.

The *only* new aspect of this reissued TLJ *Ultimate Collector's Edition* was the slipcover. Removing it revealed that the product inside was the same as it had been since 2018. The inner case had the same cover art (which therefore did not match the new slipcover or the recent releases of the other films), and, most importantly, these were the same discs as released in 2018, *not* the updated 2020 versions included in *The Skywalker Saga*. This



meant that the Blu-rays did *not* include the score-only audio track or *Meet the Porgs* featurette, but the UHD disc *did* include Dolby Vision as an option. This release was *just* a new slipcover. That's all.

Collectors reacted with a mixture of scorn, disappointment, and resignation. Surely, in some office for Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, some decision-maker was patting themselves on the back for “giving fans what they wanted” by reissuing TLJ with this new, matching slipcover, but they had missed the most important aspect of why fans were begging for a reissue of the film in the first place: the updated discs. It was a reminder that just because a company might have “listened to the fans,” that didn’t mean that the fans had actually been *heard*.

Later that same month, *Solo* also began to hit shelves with a new, matching slipcover, but again this was just a restocked product being given a new slipcover with the inner case and contents exactly as they had been since 2018. In this case, though, fans came into this discovery with very little hope that *Solo* would be treated differently than TLJ (and therefore were less disappointed when that proved true) and the knowledge that at least there weren’t already updated *Solo* discs out there that were eschewed in favor of the older discs. The original discs were simply all there had ever been.



*Solo* (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) –  
Notice that only the slipcover was different than the 2018 release.

Thankfully, determining that the 2020 reissues of TLJ and *Solo* were just

the same 2018 releases in new slipcovers was somewhat easy to spot when finding the items on store shelves, even when unable to just remove the slipcover to check inside. In each case, a small window on the back of the new slipcover was designed to allow the inner package's barcode to be accessible. Those windows were wide enough to show the area around the barcode, which made it obvious that the interior case artwork (i.e. the old case artwork) did not match the new slipcovers.



TLJ (left) and *Solo* (right) barcode windows – Notice that the backs of the cases inside were obviously not the same as the backs of the slipcovers.

### Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2020)

The United Kingdom was a bit odd in Apr. 2020 in that the region did not receive any 4K releases of *Episodes I – VII* outside of *The Skywalker Saga* through Amazon UK, nor did they receive one of *Rogue One*, which left that film entirely unavailable on Ultra HD Blu-ray at that point. The region also did not see reissues of the Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray combo releases of TLJ or *Solo*. Moreover, they still had not seen the “black-bordered” reissues of the films on Blu-ray or DVD, meaning that the only way to get the 2019 Disney+ cuts on physical media was in the three *Skywalker Saga* boxed sets, with the anthology films left out entirely.

The question lingered as to when (rather than if) those releases would finally arrive in the UK. As fans waited, news came that Zavvi would be launching exclusive, limited edition SteelBooks for each film with its respective Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray films discs, plus its Blu-ray bonus features disc. Without non-exclusive means to get these as single-film releases, they became even more sought after than typical *Star Wars* SteelBook releases. Through a series of staggered announcements, Zavvi eventually revealed new SteelBook versions for all 11 live action films, which would see staggered releases over the span of four months, starting with ANH on July 27, 2020.

The *Original Trilogy* films were released one per week, such that TESB shipped on Aug. 3, 2020, followed by ROTJ on Aug. 10. Nearly one month later, the *Prequel Trilogy* films began shipping, starting with TPM on Sept. 7, followed by AOTC two weeks later on Sept. 21, then ROTS three weeks

after that on Oct. 12. Originally intended for Oct. 26 and Nov. 2, according to Zavvi's Twitter posts, *Rogue One* and *Solo* actually followed on Nov. 2 and 9, respectively. This meant that *Solo* released the same day that TFA kicked off the *Sequel Trilogy* releases. The final two films, TLJ and TROS, then arrived on Nov. 16 and 23.

I should note also that when a huge number of Zavvi's limited edition TESB SteelBooks were slightly scratched (probably when being placed into shrink wrap), the company took the consumer-friendly path of replacing the SteelBooks (but not the undamaged discs inside) for everyone who purchased one, regardless of whether they had complained to the company about the damage.

Front over art tended to come from theatrical posters, while back cover art sources varied, and interior art was typically from the films themselves. For the *Prequel Trilogy* films, cover art came from Drew Struzan's version B theatrical posters. For the *Original Trilogy*, the ANH cover used Thomas Jung's style A poster art, TESB used Bob M. Peak's teaser poster art, and ROTJ used Kazuhiko Sano's style B poster art. (There was a great deal of anger in the collecting community over the choice of Peak's teaser art for TESB instead of something more dynamic like either Roger Kastel's style A, Thomas Jung's style B, or nearly any other TESB poster art.). The three *Sequel Trilogy* films and *Rogue One* each used their American version B poster art, while *Solo* used version C.

Back cover art featured (in order of *Episodes I – IX*, then RO and *Solo*): Darth Maul; Jango Fett; General Grievous; C-3PO and R2-D2; Yoda; Luke Skywalker with a stormtrooper; Kylo Ren; Captain Phasma; BB-8; a stormtrooper; and Chewbacca. Interior art (in the same order) featured: the Boonta Eve podrace; Yoda absorbing Dooku's Force lightning; Darth Vader and Darth Sidious overseeing construction of the Death Star; Obi-Wan Kenobi dueling Darth Vader; AT-ATs at the Battle of Hoth; C-3PO and R2-D2 approaching Jabba's palace; First Order stormtroopers; ski speeders on Crait; Rey and Kylo Ren's duel on Kef Bir; Jyn Erso undercover on Scarif; and the *Millennium Falcon* in the impound lot on Vandor.





TPM, AOTC, and ROTS (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) with J-cards



TPM, AOTC, and ROTS without J-cards



TPM, AOTC, and ROTS back covers



TPM, AOTC, and ROTJ interiors



ANH, TESB, and ROTJ (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) with J-cards



ANH, TESB, and ROTJ without J-cards





ANH, TESB, and ROTJ back covers



ANH, TESB, and ROTJ interiors



TFA, TLJ, and TROS (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) with J-cards





TFA, TLJ, and TROS without J-cards



TFA, TLJ, and TROS back covers



TFA, TLJ, and TROS interiors



RO and *Solo* (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) with J-cards



RO and *Solo* without J-cards



RO and *Solo* back covers

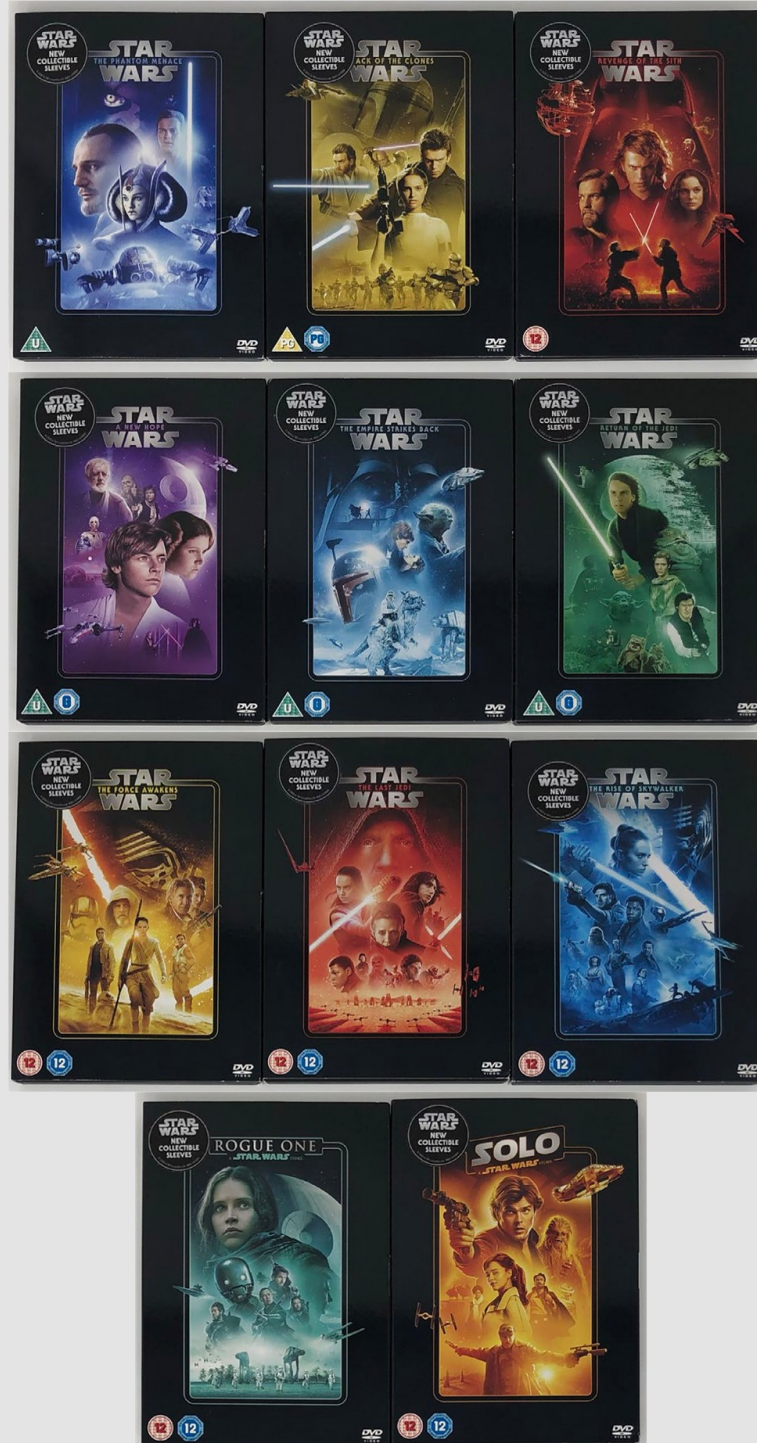


RO and *Solo* interiors

Shortly after preorders opened for the new Zavvi SteelBook version of TROS (and once the *Original Trilogy* films had all shipped), fans in the UK became aware of an upcoming “stealth” product wave (i.e. one never officially announced, such as the American black-bordered reissues in Sept. 2019). Product listings for retailers like HMV helped fans to at least know these were coming, but few were prepared for the sheer volume of releases that arrived shortly after listings began appearing. On Aug. 24, 2020, the UK saw an impressive (read: insane) wave of 33 products all at once. These were three releases for each live action film, including TROS that had only seen initial release four months earlier

One item for each film was a DVD-only version. Discs were the same DVD copies as found in the DVD-only *The Skywalker Saga* in Apr. 2020, along with reissues of the original 2017 and 2018 DVD versions of *Rogue One* and *Solo*, respectively. All featured new, black-bordered slipcovers (or, as a sticker on many of the slipcovers put it, “new collectible sleeves”). *Episodes I – VIII* all featured that black-bordered artwork on their cases. (TROS and the two anthology films each had new slipcovers but their original case art underneath.)





TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, ROTJ, TFA, TLJ, TROS, RO, and *Solo*  
(UK DVD, 2020)

A second item for each film was a Blu-ray package (the film Blu-ray and bonus features Blu-ray), which included the same discs as in the Blu-ray and Amazon UK *The Skywalker Saga* releases from Apr. 2020, along with

reissues of the original 2017 and 2018 two-disc Blu-ray versions of *Rogue One* and *Solo*, respectively. Again, all of these releases bore new black-bordered slipcovers, but only *Episodes I – VIII* received matching case art.



TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, ROTJ, TFA, TLJ, TROS, RO, and *Solo*  
(UK Blu-ray, 2020)

The third item for each film was what fans were most eager to acquire. These included each film on Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray, plus the film's



bonus features Blu-ray disc. For *Episodes I – IX* and *Solo*, these were reissued discs from Apr. 2020 and Sept. 2018, respectively. The *Rogue One* release included the 2017 Blu-ray film and bonus features discs, alongside a brand new Ultra HD Blu-ray of the film, bringing it to the UK several months after many other markets. All of these featured new, black-bordered slipcovers. Only *Solo* and TROS kept their original case art.



TPM, AOTC, ROTS, ANH, TESB, ROTJ, TFA, TLJ, TROS, RO, and *Solo*  
(UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020)





Example: ANH (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020)



Example: ANH (UK Blu-ray, 2020)



Example: ANH (UK DVD, 2020)

Unlike in the U.S., the releases for TLJ did not just repackage the old cases inside new slipcovers. Both the slipcovers and cover art were updated, and the discs were updated to those in *The Skywalker Saga*, similar to the approach taken in Australia. Moreover, whereas TROS had been presumably too new to receive matching “black-bordered” packaging in other regions, it had apparently been long enough since that initial release for TROS in the UK to also receive its own three reissues as part of this wave with old case art but with slipcovers that matched the other ten films.

Nearly all of the items in this black-bordered product line included advertising inserts. The ones that did not were those where old stock was simply repackaged. All of the DVD releases (except RO, *Solo*, and TROS) included slips advertising the DVD releases. At the other end of the spectrum, all of the Ultra HD Blu-ray/Blu-ray packages (except *Solo* and TROS) included an advertising insert for their fellow Ultra HD Blu-ray/Blu-ray releases. Oddly, while all of the Blu-ray releases (except RO, *Solo*, and TROS) included an advertising insert for black-bordered products, the inserts advertised the Ultra HD Blu-ray/Blu-ray releases, not the Blu-ray releases themselves. It was not the first time Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment had blatantly advertised a higher definition product over the product in which the advertising insert was contained, but it was still

somewhat surprising to buyers at the time.<sup>104</sup>

Acquiring these was a bit more complicated than it should have been, as some UK retailers like Zoom received old stock to send out, rather than the new releases, since any release with a previous equivalent used the same barcode as in their earlier incarnations. Fortunately, this was an issue most retailers addressed quickly and efficiently.



TLJ (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) – Notice that all three discs were the new ones from *The Skywalker Saga* earlier in the year.

<sup>104</sup> See the *Rebels* season sets in the chapter *Joining the Rebellion* in *Volume III*.





TLJ (UK Blu-ray, 2020) – Notice that both discs were the new ones from *The Skywalker Saga* earlier in the year.



TLJ (UK DVD, 2020) – Notice that even though the disc did not contain new content, it was the updated, Region 0 PAL version from earlier in the year.



RO (UK Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, 2020) – The RO Ultra HD Blu-ray was the only true “new release” from this massive wave of reissued content.



DVD releases for RO, *Solo*, and TROS were old stock with new slipcovers.



Blu-ray releases for RO, *Solo*, and TROS were old stock with new slipcovers.



Ultra HD Blu-ray/Blu-ray releases for *Solo* and TROS were old stock with new slipcovers. (RO was not merely a repackaging in this format.)



Sticker found on most of the Aug. 24, 2020, slipcovers for easy identification





### Oh, Dank Farrik! (2020)

Did you think we were done with the confusion and frustration of the American black-bordered releases? Well, so did fans by late 2020... until Thanksgiving. During the week of Thanksgiving (celebrated Nov. 26, 2020), collectors started to spot yet another black-bordered item appearing on store shelves. Approximately six months after the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* of *Solo* had been reissued in the U.S. as what was essentially the 2018 product in a new, black-bordered slipcover, *Solo* was reissued *again*. This time, the case artwork was the new, black-bordered artwork. However, this reissue lacked any slipcover at all. Instead, it was just the discs and a code slip in a case with the new artwork, sold in shrink wrap, akin to how most releases that included slipcovers for their first printing lacked those slipcovers upon subsequent restocking.

While not a highlight of this package by any means, it should be noted that the code slip *did* change for this release. For the most part, it resembled the code slips from the *Ultimate Collector's Edition* releases of *Episodes I – VII* and *RO* from Mar. 2020, but a gold band was added above the Disney Movie Insiders section to make it clear that it was just a new incarnation of Disney Movie Rewards, and the banner at the top that had once been film-specific artwork and later became just the *Star Wars* logo was now even more generic, showing logos for Pixar, Disney, *Star Wars*, and Marvel Studios.

Yes, Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment finally released *Solo* with black-bordered case art, but they had apparently wasted (for lack of a better term) the film's black-bordered slipcovers on the reissues in May, rather than pairing those slipcovers with matching interior art.

A piece of unsolicited advice for Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment: The next time you hire someone to make decisions for a product line like the 2019 – 2020 black-bordered *Star Wars* releases, make sure to list “competence” as a job requirement. It seems to have been left out this time.



*Solo* (Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray, Digital, 2020) –

Notice that this version featured the new black-bordered case art but lacked a slipcover. The code slip was also of the new, generic MA/DMI design.

### Meanwhile in the United Kingdom (2020)

To add a bizarre coda to the black-bordered release saga, this time back in the UK, different Blu-ray copies of TROS began appearing on the UK secondary market (e.g. eBay) in Nov. 2020. These new copies lacked a slipcover, but like *Solo* in America, they bore new, black-bordered case artwork. Strangely, these copies were marked as “not for individual resale,” and while the back of the cases mirrored the previous two-disc release (right down to vital stats for the bonus features disc), only the film disc was included.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>105</sup> The source of these items remains a bit of a mystery. All bear the “not for individual resale” sticker. Several collectors, including myself, have reached out to people who have sold these on eBay UK, and the best we can gather is that they were gifts to employees of a film company. The employees have thus far been too cagey to reveal which company, though one would assume it would have been affiliated with Disney in some form, if not within Disney itself.





TROS (UK Blu-ray, 2020) – Notice the lack of slipcover and bonus features disc. This was new, black-bordered case art with just the film disc.



Sticker over barcode

### For a More Digital Age (2021)

On May 24, 2021, just one day before the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *A New Hope*'s theatrical premiere, the internet began buzzing with news of changes to *The Rise of Skywalker* on Disney+. Indeed, the Disney+ version of TROS had changed. A green tint to the film (particularly in certain scenes like Ben's vision of Han on Kef Bir) was removed, providing what most considered a better color balance, and the subtitles for the scene in which Rey hears the voices of various Jedi were updated so that the subtitles properly identified each speaker. Digital copies quickly followed suit, making this a minor variant version of TROS that has not seen physical release.



**Forever Tinkering:**

***The Rise of Skywalker* Disney+ Update (2021)**

While it somewhat breaks form with other sidebars of this type, since it was not Lucas doing the tinkering this time, this *was* another instance of tinkering with a film. The updated subtitles were universally praised, while the color change was seen as positive by most fans. (Meanwhile, I just wanted a physical release of the new version...)

**Conclusion: (Mostly) Excellent, (Mostly) Expected, and Expensive**

2020 will be best known to *Star Wars* home video collectors for three things: the first eight live action films finally coming to Ultra HD Blu-ray; the home video wrap-up of the *Skywalker Saga* with *The Rise of Skywalker*; and the enormous blitz of home video releases all hitting shelves on the same day. In retrospect, that blitz was actually less items than on Sept. 22, 2019, during which 20 items hit shelves (or 28 if one counts the Walmart exclusive versions of *Episodes I – VIII* that were part of that broader release window but not on the exact same day). This batch was a “mere” 17 items: *The Skywalker Saga* at Best Buy; three regular releases of TROS; three retailer exclusive versions of TROS; two exclusive lithograph offers with preorders through Disney venues; and Ultra HD Blu-ray releases of *Episodes I – VII* and *Rogue One*. The fact that this was technically a smaller blitz meant little to the *perception* of this release, since the Sept. 2019 products had all been reissues (albeit with digital copies for the first time for the *Prequel* and *Original Trilogies*), while the vast majority of the Mar. 2020 items were new discs and thus even desirable to those who tended to shun reissues. The *Pokémon*-esque “gotta catch ‘em all” mentality of the completist may have had an easier time with the hunt for these releases than in the latter months of 2019, but it *felt* like a heavier load to lift.

Then again, we should have perhaps counted our blessings that we weren't in regions like Australia or the United Kingdom that saw even more massive, single-day product launches. On the other hand, their experiences with the black-bordered releases were *far* less tumultuous than our own.

Regardless of region, the end of the *Skywalker Saga* and its subsequent home video waves were long-awaited yet made for a crazy year in *Star Wars* home video collecting that was already, outside of the collecting sphere, considered a year that had gone almost entirely off the rails. Why should *Star Wars* home video collecting have felt any different?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nathan P. Butler is the author of several fiction works, including tales in his own universes, novellas for Decipher's *WARS* franchise, short stories for Jim Wylder's *10,000 Dawns* universe, and, most notably for *Star Wars* fans, the short *Star Wars* comic story "Equals and Opposites" for *Star Wars Tales*. (A Hasbro Comic Pack was later based on his *Star Wars Tales* story, making him the proud "storytelling papa" of a pair of action figures). He was also a contributor of dates for dated battle maps in Jason Fry and Dan Wallace's *Star Wars: The Essential Atlas* (in which he was able to officially set the Legends continuity's digital calendar start date for *Return of the Jedi*, 39:3:3). He has also contributed to non-fiction works on science fiction subjects in the pages of several Sequart essay collections and elsewhere.

In *Star Wars* fandom, he was one of the earliest *Star Wars* podcasters (2002 – 2020) and the creator/compiler of the *Star Wars* chronology project now known as *The Star Wars Timeline Gold* (1997 – 2018). He wrote and co-produced the first serious *Star Wars* fan-made audio drama released online (*Second Strike*, 2002 – 2003). Today, he produces content on Patreon and YouTube, including the series that gave birth to this book, the ongoing *From the Star Wars Home Video Library*.

By day, he is a professional social studies (history, economics, etc.) educator, having taught for over twelve years in a traditional high school classroom before becoming the first full-time social studies educator for his county's innovative online program, where he has (since Jan. 2015) led a growing social studies team, teaching students in grades six through twelve.

Originally from Evansville, IN, Butler now resides in the Atlanta metro area with his amazing fellow-fan wife Jodi (see the Introduction), his fan-in-training son Cade (yes, named after Cade Skywalker), and their cat. He can usually be found working in service to his students in his *Star Wars*-themed office in the Butler home, while Cade plays alongside him.



## ALSO BY NATHAN P. BUTLER

### Original Universes

*Greater Good* (novel)

*Echoes* (novella)

(available together in *Greater Good and Echoes*)

### WARS Novellas

*WARS: The Battle of Phobos: Healers and Hunters* (*Earthers*, Vol. 1)

(collected in *WARS: The Battle of Phobos: Preludes*)

*WARS: The Battle of Phobos: On Red Soil* (*Earthers*, Vol. 2)

(collected in *WARS: The Battle of Phobos: Stretti*)

### 10,000 Dawns Short Stories

“Unpleasant Realities”

“The Road to Hell is Paved with Legislation”

(both collected in *10,000 Dawns: Poor Man’s Iliad*)

### Star Wars Comic

“Equals and Opposites” in *Star Wars Tales* issue 21

(collected in *Star Wars Tales*, Vol. 6)

(reissued as a Hasbro Comic Pack with

Kyle Katarn and Yuuzhan Vong action figures)

### Star Wars Essay Collections (Contributor)

*A Long Time Ago: Exploring the Star Wars Cinematic Universe*

*A Galaxy Far, Far Away: Exploring Star Wars Comics*

*A More Civilized Age: Exploring the Star Wars Expanded Universe*

### Blade Runner Essay Collection (Contributor)

*The Cyberpunk Nexus: Exploring the Blade Runner Universe*

### Other Star Wars Contributions

Dated battle maps for *Star Wars: The Essential Atlas* (official)

Timeline for *Star Wars Super Collector’s Wish Book*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (unofficial)

*The Force Awakens* preview article for *Movie Magic* magazine (unofficial)

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# II

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SOLO

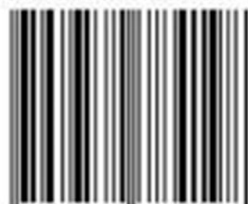
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